

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Monday 31 October 2016** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Charlton, S Forster, J Gray, C Hampson, M Hodgson, H Liddle, J Maitland, N Martin, T Nearney, P Stradling, F Tinsley, J Turnbull and C Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr A J Cooke and Mr J Welch

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Armstrong, S Iveson, K Shaw, Chief Fire Officer S Errington and Chief Superintendent A Green.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held 23 September 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee noted that in reference to the Working Group report on Organised Crime Groups, the details as regards Action Fraud and Crimestoppers had been circulated to Members. It was added that in relation to the Performance Management report, a Working Group has been arranged with Officers from Public Health to look at the issue of Substance Misuse Services, for 22 November 2016. It was explained that following the meeting, the link to the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner's Plan was circulated to Members.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

6 Media Relations

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the recent prominent articles and news stories relating to the remit of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes). The articles included: recognition of the work being undertaken by the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) in terms of their Safe and Wellbeing Visits (SWVs) and referrals to the Alzheimer's Society, with a national award to be presented in November, linking to the Committee's ongoing Working Group; and our Emergency Services working together in terms of the "Wisedrive" event, targeting young drivers.

Councillors noted that there was also a recent successful "Celebration of Superheroes" family event held at Locomotion, Shildon which had been organised by the Office of the Police, Crime and Victim's Commissioner, allowing members of the public the opportunity to meet Emergency services, including: Police; CDDFRS; Mountain Rescue; Coastguard; the RNLI as well as the stars of the Police Interceptors television programme. It was added there had been several activities on the day including: an opportunity to meet the police dogs; interactive exhibitor stands, such as Crime Scene Investigation; a treasure hunt; and a fancy dress competition.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that there would be a Special Meeting of the Committee on 1 December looking at the issues around Road Safety, including the "Fatal Four": Speeding; Drink/Drug Driving; not wearing a Seatbelt; and Distraction, for example use of a mobile phone while driving.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Checkpoint

The Chairman introduced the Chief of Staff, Office of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner, Alan Reiss who was in attendance to give an update for Members in respect of the Checkpoint programme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chief of Staff referred Members to the report circulated with the agenda papers and noted that Detective Chief Inspector Andy Crowe was also in attendance, as the Officer who ran the Checkpoint scheme.

Members were reminded that the first priority of the scheme was in reducing reoffending and to improve the outcome for victims and communities. It was added that the disposals were tracked to ensure that the root causes were being tackled, addressing the issues. It was explained that the Police had a number of out of court disposals they could utilise, for example a caution, and Checkpoint was one that added to this.

Councillors noted that in order to be eligible for Checkpoint, the subject must have admitted to the offence and that the scheme was a deferred prosecution and a voluntary adult offender scheme. It was explained that the 4 month contract would be bespoke to each subject and full compliance would result in an exit from the Criminal Justice System and no criminal conviction for the subject. It was noted that there would be engagement with victims throughout, providing them with a voice and to help persuade them that Checkpoint was a better solution, looking to prevent reoffending and prevent further victims. Members noted that the scheme was designed to identify “critical pathways” so that early interventions were possible in tackling issues and behaviours that were leading to reoffending, such as drug and alcohol dependency or lack of skills to gain employment.

The Chief of Staff reiterated that the 4 month contract was bespoke to each subject, however there were the following conditions: no reoffending within a 4 month period (mandatory); participation in a Restorative Approach (RA) (mandatory if the victim agrees); attend appointments regarding individual personal issues or undertake one-to-one intervention work with their Navigator; carry out community/voluntary work, 18-36 hours and/or wear a GPS tag; and voluntary drug testing. It was explained that the aim was to be able to stop reoffending and to help put something back into the local community. The Chief of Staff explained that the Checkpoint scheme was not a soft option with an example being the Solicitor of a regular offender in a similar scheme in Birmingham, Operation Turning Point, had complained that the diversion process was harder for their client than the traditional punishment.

Members were referred to slides that set out included offences, and it was explained there were some inaccuracies, and rather the list was:

Theft Offences – shoplifting, taking from a motor vehicle, theft of a motor vehicle, theft from a person, vehicle interference

- Burglary Dwelling
- Criminal Damage – dwellings, buildings, vehicles, arson
- Drug possession
- Fraud
- Public Order – Section 3, 4 and 5, Drunk and Disorderly
- Child Neglect (Safeguarding Approval)
- Assaults – Common and Actual Bodily Harm

Members were asked to note in the case of child neglect, long discussions had taken place working with Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council Social Services to ensure the suitability for the Checkpoint scheme and have key protocols agreed.

Councillors noted the types of activities offenders would undertake in terms of their Checkpoint contract and were shown an image of remedial works carried out at Stanley Pool. It was noted that the “Durham Difference” included: instead of issuing a traditional out of court disposal such as a caution or fixed penalty notice (FPN), Durham Constabulary would look to solve the problem; Checkpoint Navigators take the time to get to know an offender and identify what the real causes of offending were; Navigators work with the person to address those issues, navigating to the right services and removing their need to offend; and the Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIC) stating that Checkpoint was “an exceptional offender management system”.

The Chief of Staff explained that Navigators were not Police Officers, and their role was much more than simply signposting, they would look to help offenders, seeing them as individuals and encouraging them to move forward. It was added that there was access to Checkpoint across all of County Durham and Darlington, working with a range of partners, including Durham County Council (DCC) and that updates were reported to the Reducing Reoffending Group and in turn the Criminal Justice Board, Safer Durham Partnership and Darlington Safe Partnership.

Members noted that another method of influencing people's behaviour was to use "nudges", with examples given being the use of bodycams by all frontline Officers. It was noted that the footage can then be used to show offenders their actions which can lead to a change in attitude and behaviour. An outline was given of a case study where an individual was referred to the Checkpoint programme and had been shown the bodycam footage of the arrest and the individual had been very remorseful and had made good progress with their Checkpoint contract, working with Social Services and North East Council on Alcoholism (NECA) at Darlington. Councillors noted the "Because of you" focusing on highlighting the harm caused by people using drugs in terms of giving money to Organised Crime Groups (OCGs), funding more serious crimes such as murder and terrorism.

The Chief of Staff explained that many offenders were wishing to volunteer even after their contract was completed and there could be an opportunity for "peer mentoring". Members noted the complete offender management platform being used, COMET (Client and Offender Management Engagement Tracker) which held all of the relevant data securely and had access to a directory of partners offering support. It was added that in time, partners should be able to input their information into COMET in addition and therefore the whole offender journey would be in one place. Members learned as regards 3D "street interventions", or community interventions which can help negate arrests, and also as regards other early interventions for cases where offenders were not eligible for Checkpoint or had not been arrested.

It was explained that looking at 5 years' worth of data in terms of the likelihood of an offender reoffending that by 24 months around 60% had reoffended, with 10% representing serious offences. In terms of performance of the Checkpoint programme it was noted that around 2,500 people had gone through programme, with the most common pathways being alcohol, mental health and "consequential thinking". Members noted headline figures in terms of: 5.9% failing as a result of lack of engagement; 4.3% being re-arrested while under contract; 14.3% re-arrested within 18 months of Checkpoint; and 4% receiving a conviction within 18 months of Checkpoint.

The Chief of Staff concluded by noting that the benefits of the Checkpoint scheme were four-fold: the offender had the opportunity to improve their life; victims were given a voice; communities were improved through physical works and better social cohesion; and the criminal justice system saved in terms of time and resources that would have been spent as regards court.

The Chairman thanked the Chief of Staff for his presentation and asked Members of the Committee for their questions.

Mr AJ Cooke noted the figures in terms of those failing as regards a lack of engagement as asked whether there was “a second chance”. The Chief of Staff noted that by policy there was not a second chance, and DCI A Crowe added that as the offender had been arrested and through Checkpoint their prosecution had been deferred, any breach of their Checkpoint contract would result them coming out of the programme.

Councillor J Maitland asked as regards any age restrictions on the scheme, it was noted that the programme was for those 18 years and older, and that the data was available broken down by age and gender, with the Chief of Staff noting that there were a number of women aged 35 – 50 with alcohol issues and DCI A Crowe adding approximately 35% of offenders in the Checkpoint programme were female.

Councillor N Martin asked as regards the legal basis of the scheme and who was responsible for deciding whether an individual would go into the Checkpoint programme. The Chief of Staff noted that in terms of legal cover, via the Government, namely the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) there were a number of out of court disposals and the CPS were represented on the Checkpoint Board. It was added that while there was the list of offences which could be eligible for Checkpoint, there was no automatic eligibility. DCI A Crowe noted that offences considered by Crown Court would not be eligible for Checkpoint, and that the offender on a Checkpoint programme was effectively bailed for 4 months currently, though the MoJ was looking at introduction 28 day bail limits for England and Wales, though processes were in place should this come into effect. Members noted that when offenders sign up with their navigators, there would be a meeting halfway to assess the progress being made.

Councillor T Nearney asked as regards the list of eligible offences, whether it would be expanded and if there would be capacity, for example in terms of navigators. The Chief of Staff noted that the Police, Crime and Victims’ Commissioner (PCVC) for Durham was committed to the Checkpoint programme and while budgets were under pressure, the programme offered the opportunity to solve problems early and from that perspective was a good investment. It was added that Police Innovation Funding had been utilised, though this ended in March 2017, so the programme would be mainstreamed. It was explained that the list of offences could be expanded, though carefully, with an area being looked at was harassment, showing the impact upon victims, and the use of social media and malicious communications. The Chief of Staff added that the Chief Constable’s and PCVC’s position on drugs was well documented and clear and therefore there could be scope for some offences to be included. It was added that currently there was capacity in terms of navigators and that this would be monitored accordingly.

Mr AJ Cooke asked if offenders were informed that they would not get a second chance at the Checkpoint programme should they breach their contract. DCI A Crowe noted that the programme was explained and that access to the programme was 3 strikes, so effectively a maximum of 3 over a 5½ year period. Councillor F Tinsley asked if those with an existing criminal record were eligible. DCI A Crowe noted they would be, with only 15% of those in or having gone through the Checkpoint programme having no criminal record.

The Chairman noted it was important to get the message across within our communities that the Checkpoint programme was not a “soft touch”. DCI A Crowe explained that focus groups had shown that two things that people concerned with were catching offenders and making sure that the crime did not happen again, no more victims from that offender, and Checkpoint offered 4 months of intensive intervention, with the results from the programme being positive.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

8 Community and Organisational Resilience for Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery

The Chairman introduced the Civil Contingencies Officer, Transformation and Partnerships Peter Bodo who was in attendance to speak to Members in respect of community and organisational resilience for emergency preparedness, response and recovery (for copy see file of minutes).

The Civil Contingencies Officer explained that the role of the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) was to: plan for emergencies; promote business continuity; train and exercise; provide incident response; and help improve community resilience. It was noted that all Local Authorities had the responsibility in terms of “emergency planning”, there were close working relationships with our blue light services and that community resilience would fit into all of the other areas.

Members noted the definition of community resilience as set out by Government was:

“Communities and individuals using local resources and expertise to help themselves to prepare for and respond to an emergency”.

It was explained that there were many risks, though a common risk was that of flooding. It was noted that flooding was roughly in the same places and therefore the CCU worked with those communities to help them prepare as best they could. It was added that other risks included: severe winter weather, the last being experienced in 2010; pandemic flu; land slip; power cuts, though usually as a consequence of severe weather; animal disease, with this being a big risk for our remote communities the foot and mouth crisis 15 years ago being an example; and environmental contamination, with CCU working with chemical manufacturers in this regard.

Members understood that County Durham was diverse geographically and that local communities could help in terms of directing emergency services to specific locations and help advise and warn neighbours to prepare. It was added that local communities could help to monitor and support their most vulnerable residents and assist people and businesses that were in difficulty. It was noted that local knowledge was always useful and that local people were able to help protect vulnerable properties and assist in getting a community back to normality following an incident.

The Civil Contingencies Officer explained that a Community Group could help by producing a Community Plan to set out in advance who does what, when and from where. Members noted that this did not have to be a long or comprehensive document, with such varying from 2 A4 pages of contact details to a 20 page document setting out details of what to do in various situations. It was added that Community Groups could also promote and act on flood alerts, liaise with emergency services and the Council, and train and exercise to help develop preparedness. Members noted that Community Groups could have small stocks in place, for example of aqua sacs or sandbags, and store them securely closer to the areas where they need to be deployed.

Councillors noted that Community Groups could also provide rest centres, set up in locations such as village halls, and help vulnerable residents to prepare. It was added that Community Groups could also support local businesses in preparing for an emergency, and also help to evacuate people and move belongings.

The Committee noted an example in Lanchester, where a Community Group had been set up in response to the risk of Smallhope Burn flooding. It was explained that there was a self-supporting network of local residents that had built up a trusting working relationship with emergency responders, and an emergency response plan was in place. It was highlighted that the trusted working relationship was vitally important and was a 2-way process in terms of feedback and communication to be best able to take on board local knowledge.

The Civil Contingencies Officer explained that organisational resilience was “business continuity plus” and again templates were available via DCC to help develop business continuity plans and an online questionnaire was available to give a “business health resilience check” which set out a “red, amber, green” (RAG) report including useful signposts and areas for improvement.

In asking what the Council had done to prepare, it was highlighted that CCU Officers had trained with the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative and had a recognised award in terms of promoting business resilience. Members noted that the CCU had visited 15 caravan sites across the County, targeted on those located within flood areas, and had provided advice on emergency preparedness and business resilience. Councillor noted that the CCU had also been working with the Duke of Cornwall Community Safety Award; a well-recognised award aimed at uniformed youth groups, in terms of giving young people the opportunity to learn what to do in an emergency situation and how to make a difference in their community. Members noted “Exercise Levantine”, a skills training exercise based upon a flooding scenario involving Durham Constabulary, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS), North East Ambulance; British Red Cross; the CCU and the Radio Amateurs’ Emergency Network (RAYNET). The Committee noted that there were a number of school and community events, with 17 schools engaged in 2015/16 and 22 in 2016/17. It was added that 5 community events had taken place in terms of flooding as well as the visits to caravan sites and Operation Levantine as previously mentioned. Councillors were reminded of the work with Junior Education and Diversion (Junior ED) visiting schools to teach mainly Year 6 pupils as regards flooding, cyber security, severe weather and flu, amongst other subjects.

Members were informed of other initiatives, such as Rainworks, rain activated messages that remain invisible when dry, highlighting potential evacuation routes. Councillors were reminded that there was help available for community groups and businesses including Plan templates and guides, as well as support offered by the CCU. It was reiterated that there were potential resources deployed in advance of incidents and training and exercises carried out to help prepare community groups. The Civil Contingencies Officer concluded by noting the achievements to date, including: greater community awareness; greater knowledge on local risks; localised resources deployed; quicker localised response; quicker recovery; increased business resilience; and increased community resilience.

The Chairman thanked the Civil Contingencies Officer for his presentation and asked Members for their questions, noting that it would be beneficial to have the report and presentation at Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) and Town and Parish Councils for their information.

Councillor S Forster asked who in our communities has these Community Plans and how would people get to know about them. The Civil Contingencies Officer noted that usually they would be well promoted within a community by the appropriate groups and if a community wants to have plan then they could contact the CCU. The Chairman noted the CCU details would be circulated.

Councillor F Tinsley noted that there was not much mentioned in relation to terrorist incidents or a major accident, such as a train crash. The Civil Contingencies Officer noted they were not omitted, rather while there was a risk it was not a very high likelihood and therefore the focus was on more local issues and the more frequently occurring risks. It was noted however that Community Plans would help in any emergency situation, with general information and contacts being useful.

It was noted as regards concern raised by local residents in terms of where chemical plants were located, and should there be an incident, the CCU had worked with residents in terms of Community Resilience Plans.

Councillor N Martin noted that in terms of business resilience, the people were the important part, and that ensuring that staff can get to businesses in severe winter weather was an issue especially where a business was not located on a major route treated by the Council. Councillor N Martin added that in terms of estate roads being unusable due to snow and ice being an issue for people being able to get out to work, shops, access services he and another Councillor had bought snow shovels to use. Councillor N Martin asked if there was any support that the CCU could offer in this, and how could such equipment be paid for. The Civil Contingencies Officer noted that the CCU did not have a large budget, however if a Community Resilience Plan was in place and a key risk was identified it may be possible to supply some equipment, looking at each issue on a case-by-case basis. Councillor N Martin asked how a "community" was defined with urban areas being very different to rural communities. The Civil Contingencies Officer added that the CCU would not only supply equipment, they would be able to help see where to deploy existing resources and look at how to act in an emergency situation.

Councillor J Maitland asked as regards environmental contamination, for example derelict coal seams. The Civil Contingencies Officer noted this was an issue to be monitored by the Coal Authority, however the risk was noted.

Councillor T Nearney added that if communities did not know of the CCU and what could be put in place they would not ask and therefore was there anything Councillors could do in terms of helping to promote or assess an area, looking at the needs of our communities. The Civil Contingencies Officer noted that the CCU had attended all the AAPs in the past to offer support to communities should they perceive a risk and had also attended Town and Parish Councils in addition. The Strategic Manager, PPP, Andrea Petty noted that there were links to access the CCU information on the Council's website.

Councillor M Hodgson noted that there was a need to manage expectations, especially in the current climate of savings and diminishing resources. The Civil Contingencies Officer noted that it was about working within existing budgets and helping to assess risk. Councillor M Hodgson noted that it could be an area Members could assist with their Neighbourhood Budget, where appropriate.

Councillor J Charlton asked what risks and liabilities there were in working with such local community groups, noting a more litigious society in recent years. The Civil Contingencies Officer understood the concerns and would never advocate anyone put themselves in danger or at risk, adding that the CCU could support local groups in understanding how they could help communities.

Mr J Welch noted that farmers were a vital part of our rural communities and were involved in supporting them in times of emergency. It was noted that indeed there was situations where their local knowledge and being embedded within communities was advantageous, for example in helping to plough snow from more rural areas, working with colleagues from the Highways Section.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

9 Overview and Scrutiny Review Updates

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted the two reviews had been undertaken by the Committee, one looking at Improved Safety in the Home, namely the Safe and Wellbeing Visits (SWVs) carried out by the CDDFRS. Members were reminded evidence gathering had been completed and a draft report would be presented to the Working Group for comments next Tuesday, with Members having the opportunity to discuss and shape recommendations. The Chairman thanked Members and officers from the CDDFRS for their involvement and work on this topic, especially Councillor T Nearney who had chaired the Working Group.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that in terms of the Alcohol and Demand on the Emergency Services Working Group, the report was currently in draft format and sought agreement from the Committee for the report to be circulated to Members for comments, and once received and collated the Chairman agree the draft report, to then be submitted to the December meeting of Cabinet.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

10 Police and Crime Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) had taken place after the agenda papers had been dispatched for today's meeting and therefore he would give a verbal update.

It was explained that there had been three main items discussed, namely: the PCVC's Plan, which had been supported by the PCP; the performance measures in place as regards the PCP; and the new Victims' Strategy.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer added that details and links as regards these items would be circulated to Members.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

11 Safe Durham Partnership Update

The Chairman asked the Community Safety Manager, Caroline Duckworth to speak to Members as regards an update from the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP).

Members noted that several of the issues discussed by the SDP Board had been touched on during the meeting, including the Police, Crime and Victims' (PSV) Plan and Safe and Wellbeing Visits.

The Community Safety Manager noted that other issues discussed at the SDP meeting included Organised Crime, namely "Does your work take you behind closed doors?" highlighting the important issue and that information on this would be circulated to AAPs and internally at the Council. Members noted issues in terms of Reducing Reoffending, with three priority areas having been identified: a review of the pathways to desistance throughout the criminal justice system; growing use of restorative justice; and developing the performance framework.

Councillors noted a review of the Local Criminal Justice Board and governance arrangements of the SDP in terms of abuse-related areas: domestic abuse and sexual violence; modern slavery / human trafficking; honour based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation; hate crime; and financial abuse of vulnerable adults.

Members also noted items relating to casualty trends across the North East and County Durham, similar to the presentation to the Committee received in September from the Strategic Traffic Manager and Chairman of Road Safety Great Britain, Dave Wafer. The Community Safety Manager added that in relation to funding, it had been noted that there was funding via the PCVC in terms of community safety projects focusing on the SDP and PCVC strategic objectives and that a Funding Group was looking to develop funding bids in relation to: cyber-crime; domestic abuse; open water safety equipment; community cohesion; the Multi-Agency Intervention Service (MAIS); and PREVENT.

The Community Safety Manager concluded explaining that all 14 AAPs had held their Annual General Meetings and 7 had selected Crime and Community Safety, Road Safety or Traffic Management as their priority. It was explained that 15 projects had been delivered under the Altogether Safer theme and that AAPs Boards had recently agreed to receive Police and Communities Together (PACT) issues at each Board meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Community Safety Manager for her update and asked Members for any questions.

Councillor M Hodgson asked whether the SDP, when looking at the Police, Crime and Victims' Plan, was reviewing the Plan or looking at outcomes or something different. The Strategic Manager, PPP noted that there was the opportunity to highlight high profile elements such as PREVENT and to provide feedback on issues.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.