

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 **Friday 21 September 2018** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Bainbridge, J Charlton, J Considine, R Crute, S Iveson, H Liddle, E Mavin, J Nicholson, K Thompson, J Turnbull and C Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Balls and Mr A J Cooke

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Hall, C Hampson, L Kennedy, J Maitland and J Stephenson and Chief Fire Officer S Errington and Chief Superintendent A Green.

2 Substitute Members

There were no Substitute Members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held 25 June, 5 July and 24 July were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman, subject to an amendment to those from 25 June correcting a typographical error, to read "...demographics, a population of around 520,000 with around 51,600 young males, aged 10-25 years old." at paragraph 2 of Minute 7.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee noted in terms of matters arising that further to the item relating to the Work Programme, a Workshop Session had been arranged with Co-opted Member, Chief Superintendent Adrian Green to give a presentation on Recorded Crime. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer added that in terms of the Special Meeting relating to ERASE, a response to the presentation had been made available to the Portfolio Holder and Chair of the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP), with the item added to the Work Programme for an update in the next 12 months. Members noted that the information in terms of the Arson and Secondary Fires a response had been forwarded to the SDP.

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: information on the number of children at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE); a new scheme in East Durham to help prevent arson incidents, linking to the Special Meeting of the Committee looking at this issue; and the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner (PCVC) hosting a specialist conference on the topic of hate crime, an item contained within the agenda.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Probation Services

The Chairman introduced the Head of the National Probation Service (NPS) – Durham, Maureen Gavin, who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to Probation Services (for copy see file of minutes). The Chairman noted that, unfortunately, the Chief Executive of the Durham, Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), Bronwen Elphick could not be in attendance and would attend a future meeting of the Committee to speak to Members in relation to the CRC.

The Head of the NPS – Durham noted she would remind Members of the changes to Probation Services and explain the progress that had been made since the last time the Committee had been updated in February 2016. The Committee noted the changes in 2014 where Probation Services had been split into 2 areas, the NPS with 7 regional divisions and 21 CRCs. It was added that the NPS managed high risk offenders and also assessed risk and advised Courts to enable the effective sentencing and rehabilitation of offenders. The Head of the NPS – Durham explained that the NPS also worked in partnership with the CRC and other service providers and worked to provide the best possible service to the public, enforcing the sentence of all Court and working together with partners, communities, and with those offenders under the supervision of the NPS to change their lives through reform, rehabilitation and reparation to help build safer communities.

Members noted the current structure in place at the NPS in the North East Division, the current Director, Lynda Morginson and the large area covered from Berwick down to Boston, Lincolnshire. The NPS Strategic Priorities were explained, in terms of: engagement; service user involvement; quality; purpose; humanity; openness; and togetherness.

The Head of the NPS – Durham referred to engagement and specifically “Project Beta”, a project that had looked at a gap which had been identified in terms of accommodation for offenders who were coming out of custody. It was added that it was known that if offenders were settled once out of custody, they would have more of a stake in their community and be less likely to reoffend and that having a place to live was the first step in being able to progress to training or employment. She noted that offenders were not being asked as regards what their needs upon release would be until 3 months beforehand, which was not providing sufficient lead-in time in terms of liaising with Local Authorities in terms of housing need. The Head of the NPS – Durham explained that in County Durham, the NPS worked with Durham County Council (DCC), with the Strategic Manager for Housing, Lynn Hall and counterparts at Darlington Borough Council (DBC) and colleagues from HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). It was noted that through Project Beta, NPS Staff and Housing Officers would work with offenders 6 months before release, liaising with other service providers, such as the Council’s Drug and Alcohol Service, to help make preparations for the offender leaving custody. It was added the project had been very successful, mentioned within the Justice Select Committee at Parliament as an example of national best practice.

Councillors noted the areas relating to quality, with the Head of the NPS – Durham adding that performance was good, however, this was not the whole story in terms of the work being undertaken. She explained as regards the ongoing training, both nationally and provide bespoke and of work with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community, another area recognised as national best practice. Members noted the use of audits in terms of looking to refining effectiveness and of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) and the good understating that NPS Staff had of this. The Head of the NPS – Durham explained that an inspection from HMIP in 2016 had not raised any areas of concern and added that she had undertaken a number of “back to the floor” exercises in terms of Probation Officers and within Victim Units to gain a better understanding of the issues faced by staff and services.

The Committee noted service user involvement with surveys, focus groups, a Service User Council, and with a “you said, we did” style of feedback. It was added that in terms of service user involvement, the North East Strategy had been used to inform the National Strategy.

The Head of the NPS – Durham noted Government consultation “Strengthening Probation, Building Confidence”, which looked at realigning NPS and CRCs once the current CRC contracts end in 2020. It was noted that proposals were to align the NPS and CRC in 10 regions, with each region to have one senior HMPPS Manager responsible for joining up services and working with stakeholders.

The Chairman thanked the Head of the NPS – Durham and asked Members of the Committee for their questions and comments.

Councillor K Thompson noted with interest the work of Project Beta and asked if there had been any evidence of a positive impact. The Head of the NPS – Durham noted that it was early in the process, as described work was with offenders 6 months prior to leaving custody and with the first cohort now moving back in communities it was looking positive. She added that there would be a formal evaluation of the project, working with Durham University, so the longer term impact would be assessed.

Mr D Balls noted issues in relation to CRCs being unable to meet timescales across the county and asked if there were any such issues in Durham. The Head of the NPS – Durham noted that this would be a question for the Chief Executive of the Durham, Tees Valley CRC who unfortunately had been unable to attend.

Councillor S Iveson noted numbers in terms of the management of low and medium risk offenders and asked if there were figures for those high risk offenders the NPS managed. The Head of the NPS – Durham explained that it was complex, with the NPS managing some low and medium risk offenders, however, she would look to supply the information to the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to then provide to Members.

Councillor J Nicholson noted work within Food Banks, and noted her experience of 2 ex-offenders who struggled as they had a long period upon leaving custody where they were not able to receive any support. The Head of the NPS – Durham noted that while this was not a NPS or CRC issue, it was noted that there had been problems in terms of those leaving custody not being able to access Universal Credit. She added that within Project Beta it had been looked at to see if there was a way to access earlier, and there was not. Members were reminded that the PCVC, Ron Hogg and raised this particular issue with Ministers, having been identified as impacting upon the work of the Police and Probation Services.

Councillor J Charlton asked if there was an average probation time and whether offenders were provided consistency with a single Probation Officer during their time under licence, helping to understand an individual's issues, such as mental health or problems with drugs and alcohol. The Head of the NPS – Durham noted that there was no average, it was dependent upon the type of crime and sentence, with some offenders given a "life licence". She added that she agreed in terms of retaining the same Probation Officer, with relationships being key to reducing reoffending, and this was the case wherever possible. Councillor R Crute noted the previous comments relating to Universal Credit and asked that if this, and other issues linked to "austerity" and Government policy had been felt and impacted upon the work of the NPS. He asked also in terms of lines of accountability, noting that ultimately the NPS was responsible to Ministers, however the CRCs were responsible to shareholders. The Head of the NPS – Durham noted that the NPS was not aligned area-wise with Prisons, however, the issues affecting society more generally were mirrored within the cohort dealt with by the NPS. The Head of the NPS – Durham noted the differences between the NPS and CRCs, with the NPS looking to mitigate the issues related with the split between 2 organisations, and also with the NPS being a commissioner, being able to purchase services from CRCs, and the CRCs being providers. She added that NPS staff were civil servants, reporting to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and that the CRC providers had bid for contracts in 2013 and Members recall the successful allocations in our regions with providers working on a "payment by results" model.

The Chairman noted there were areas of low housing demand within the County and asked how the process of managing where offenders would be housed would ensure there was not high densities of ex-offenders from any particular type of crime, for example sex offenders. The Head of the NPS – Durham noted that all sex offenders were managed by the NPS and that the NPS had oversight in terms of those under licence, with systems being in place. She added that the NPS worked with Risk Management Officers from the Police in terms of the transition once their licence term had been completed.

The Chairman noted that Co-opted Member, Chief Superintendent A Green, Durham Constabulary had been unable to attend, however, had asked in terms of the Active Risk Management System (ARMS) assessments and performance. The Head of the NPS – Durham noted that all new assessments had been completed within timescales, and while she did not have figures to hand, a small backlog that had existed previously had now been caught up.

Councillor E Mavin asked if any housing had been allocated specifically for offenders leaving custody. The Head of the NPS – Durham noted there was no specific allocation, with NPS working with Housing colleagues within DCC and DBC.

Mr AJ Cooke asked as regards policies in place relating to the handover of offenders from the NPS to the Police, for example sex offenders, when their licence period had been completed. The Head of the NPS – Durham noted she did not know specifics relating to Police policy, however, the NPS did work jointly with Police Risk Management Officers in advance of licence periods ending and therefore there was some consistency. The Chairman noted that it may be possible to ask Chief Superintendent A Green to supply information in this regard.

Councillor J Turnbull asked as regards if the NPS managed tenants of particular housing groups. The Head of the NPS – Durham reiterated that the NPS only managed those under licence, regardless of housing association or private landlord.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation relating to the National Probation Service - North East be noted.

8 Hate Crime Action Group

The Chairman introduced the Head of Policy and Communications, Office of the PCVC, Jon Carling who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Hate Crime Action Group (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC thanked Members and asked the Committee to recall that the PCVC, Ron Hogg had since his election 5 years ago always set out within his Police, Crime and Victims' Plan (PCVP) measures to reduce and tackle hate crime and to support victims and vulnerable people. It was added that the Hate Crime Action Group (HCAG) did not itself provide delivery, however, its members were responsible in terms of delivering against the issue. It was noted that the HCAG included DCC, DBC, Durham Constabulary, Durham University and organisations from the voluntary and community sector (VCS), for example Show Racism the Red Card.

The Committee noted the HCAG had 2 broad functions: to hold service-providing organisations to account; and to oversee the delivery of initiatives to address hate crime. Members were reminded of the priorities within the PCVP that related to the work of the HCAG: tackle and reduce hate crime; ensure victims are supported at all stages of the criminal justice system; and safeguard vulnerable people.

The Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC explained that from this the Joint Hate Crime Action Group (JHCAG) developed 4 objectives to support the priorities: understand and reduce the true level of hate crimes and incidents; increase reporting of hate incidents; provide effective support for victims; and to ensure effective prosecutions.

It was explained that on 4 July 2018 the PCVC hosted a Hate Crime Conference at the Xcel Centre in Newton Aycliffe attended by over 120 people from a wide range of organisations in the public and voluntary sectors. It was added that over 20 workshops were held and delegates helped to identify areas of work that could help achieve the JHCAG objectives. Councillors noted that these were distilled into manageable projects and formed the draft Joint Hate Crime Action Plan.

The Committee noted the Plan had five areas: communications strategy; reporting mechanisms and pathways; intelligence sharing; use of evidence to secure convictions; and mapping of support for victims and to identify gaps. The Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC noted that over the course of the next year, the JHCAG would monitor the progress of the five areas/workstreams as well as hold the Police to account in relation to putting measures in place to tackle and reduce hate crime. It was added there would also be work in terms of holding DCC and DBC to account in delivery of measures to tackle and reduce hate crime. Members were reminded of the Community Cohesion Toolkit and it was explained that this would be reviewed and consideration would be given as to whether it would be possible to have a wider application to other service providers. The Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC concluded by noting that the JHCAG would report back to the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) and the Darlington Community Safety Partnership in terms of progress.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC and asked Members of the Committee for their questions and comments.

Councillor R Crute noted the excellent work adding it was timely in terms of the increase use of social media and its misuse. He noted the work of the PCVC, however asked if there was other work ongoing nationally in this regard. The Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC noted that there was and that that work was being looked at and any lessons would be learned accordingly, especially from other Forces across the country.

Mr D Balls noted the work and added that it would be important in terms of communication and tone to highlight good news stories, and it would be advisable to emphasise and reinforce these. The Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC agreed that this was true and that it would be so, with positive stories helping to encourage people to have the confidence to report incidents and in the processes in place.

Councillor E Mavin noted some of the correspondence that Councillor dealt with were of an unpleasant nature and noted some bordered on being hate crime. The Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC noted that he would encourage anyone that felt there was a dimension of hate crime in an incident to report this to be looked at further.

Councillor J Considine asked if there was work ongoing in schools as there were parallels in terms of hate crime and bullying. The Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC noted that at a recent Investing in Children conference a number of young people gave presentations about their stories. He added that there had been some materials produced in the past, a DVD and a book.

The Chairman noted agreed with Councillor J Considine and asked how the level of severity was ascertained, in terms of bullying that could escalate up to hate crime. The Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC noted that an incident was a hate crime if the victim identifies it as such. He added that there were more hate crimes relating to race or religion, then sexual orientation and then disability, then perhaps age which he proposed should be considered as a category in terms of hate crime. It was added that it was felt that disability hate crime was underreported and the Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC explained that should young people, or anyone, experience hate crime via social media they should come forward and report it. In relation to underreporting of disability hate crime, Councillor C Wilson noted a recent addition to a soap with a strong disabled character. The Head of Policy and Communications, PCVC agreed that it was important and beneficial to have positive portrayals in order to help in society or widely.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 Quarter 1 2018/19 Performance Report

The Chairman introduced the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager, Tom Gorman who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter 1 2018/19 Performance Management Report for the Altogether Safer theme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager referred Members to the report and noted a change to the reporting, with the key performance indicators (KPIs) being set out against the key performance questions (KPQs): how effective are we at tackling crime and disorder; how effective are we at tackling anti-social behaviour; how well do we reduce misuse of drugs and alcohol; how well do we tackle abuse of vulnerable people, including domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation; and how do we keep our environment safe, including roads and waterways.

It was noted that the key performance issues with a reduction in performance included an increase in the crime rate (reported), with a workshop session for Members on Recorded Crime to be held on 4 October, with Chief Superintendent A Green to present. It was added that anti-social behaviour (ASB) had decrease by approximately 8% with many now becoming crime rather than previously being separated and categorised as ASB. Members noted an increase in ASB reported to the Council, 8.8%.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager explained that the people's perceptions of the Police and DCC in dealing with concerns of ASB and crime was 53% lower than for the same period the previous year. It was noted that the figures the Police recorded in terms of public perception of Police dealing with concerns had remained static and accordingly the Council would speak to colleagues at the Police in terms of work they undertook in relation to public perception.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager noted that alcohol and drug treatment performance was now hitting target, and improvements were moving towards national averages.

Members were reminded that the Committee had previously received information as regards the new partner, DISC, who began delivery in February 2018.

Councillors noted the recent JTAI into the multi-agency response to domestic violence had been carried out in July by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, Fire and Rescue Services, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and HMIP. It was added that the final inspection letter had been published on 24 August and the next step was to prepare a written statement of proposed action responding to the report findings by 3 December 2018. It was explained that the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny, Councillor R Crute had asked that this was an area that Overview and Scrutiny would be involved with, specifically the Safer and Stronger Communities and the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Committee noted that in terms of those killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic incidents, the overall numbers had decreased, and in addition there had been no fatalities. Members noted a slight increase in the number of children involved, though it was added they were small numbers, being 3 the previous year and 4 this year.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager, and noted the progress in terms of the Drug and Alcohol Service, particularly pleasing as it had been an area the Committee had been keen, through its work and review, to see improvements and progress. He asked Members for their questions and comments,

Councillor J Charlton noted the public perception figures and explained that Police feedback was very good on incidents reported, however, she had found the DCC feedback in terms of environmental issues and ASB had not been as good and asked if this could have an impact. She also asked if in terms of 20mph limits, this had an impact upon the KSI figures. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager noted that ASB report had increased and that feedback was one of the issues that DCC were speaking to colleagues at Durham Constabulary, and as regards their work with Durham University on this issue. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that in relation to the 20mph limits, the impact was not yet known, however evaluation was being carried out with further information to come back to the Committee as scheduled in the 2019/20 Work Programme.

Councillor R Crute noted that if the public perception of how the Police and DCC tackle crime and ASB did not match the reality of how the organisations actually performed then this suggested to him that there was a communication problem. He added that it could also be an issue in what the public perceived the Council could influence and act upon. He felt that it was important for the Council to promote what we do and what we can do and therefore we should "beef up" the promotion of reporting mechanisms. Councillor R Crute added that in relation to the PCVC in renewing their KPIs, could a relevant addition under KPQ 5 accordingly. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager noted that the relevant KPIs would be looked at.

Councillor E Mavin noted that in relation to 20mph limits, all of his local Parish area had 20mph limits and that from his experience local people did, in general, abide by those limits. He added that those that did stick to the limit appeared to be those from outside of the local area, for example delivery drivers.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Overview and Scrutiny Review Updates

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update in relation to the review activities of the Committee, noting that the Vice-Chairman, Councillor H Liddle had presented the Committee's Cybercrime Report to the SDP Board in July, with an update in relation to recommendations scheduled for the March 2019 meeting of the Committee.

It was added that there was an upcoming Joint Working Group with the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to Private Children's Residential Care Homes. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that in relation to the Committee wishing to look at the issues in terms of KSI and Road Safety, the Head of Technical Services had noted the opportunity to look at the Road Safety Partnership and the Road Safety Strategy. He added he would work on a draft project plan and come back to Members with further information in due course.

Councillor J Nicholson noted some good road safety work carried out in her area, Stanley, and would speak to the Overview and Scrutiny Officer as regards this.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

11 Police and Crime Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred to the update report in respect of the Police and Crime Panel (PCP), noting issues considered at the last meeting of the Panel included: the appointment of the chairman and Vice-chairman, Councillor L Hovvells (DCC) and Councillor B Jones (DBC) respectively; the PCVC's Annual Report; the refreshed PCVP; Crime Statistics; Quarterly Performance; and Commissioning in 2018/19.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that information in terms of the crime statistics reported at the PCP would be circulated for information, in advance of the Recorded Crime Workshop on 4 October as previously mentioned.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.