

## **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 **Thursday 14 February 2019** at **9.30 am**

#### **Present:**

**Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)**

#### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors B Avery, A Bainbridge, J Charlton, J Considine, R Crute, C Hampson, S Iveson, H Liddle, A Patterson, J Stephenson, D Stoker, J Turnbull and C Wilson

#### **Co-opted Members:**

Mr D Balls

#### **Co-opted Employees/Officers:**

Chief Superintendent A Green

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Hall, L Kennedy, J Maitland, E Mavin, J Nicholson and Mr A J Cooke.

### **2 Substitute Members**

There were no Substitute Members.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held 7 January 2019 were agreed as a correct records and signed by the Chairman.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee noted that in respect of items discussed at the meeting: the contact number for the Drug and Alcohol Service was circulated to Members; a response on behalf of the Committee in relation to the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service's (CDDFRS) Integrated Risk Management Plan consultation was sent to the Fire Service; and comments in relation to road casualty reduction had been fed back to the Strategic Traffic Manager, Dave Wafer.

### **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: Operation Sentinel, a Police operation led by the North East Special Operations Unit (NESOU) regarding cease and desist activities relating to those purchasing tools used in cybercrime, setting out the risks and demonstrating to those individuals the positive uses of such skills; millions of fake cigarettes being seized across the UK, with mention of the work undertaken in Durham by the Consumer Protection Team.

### **Resolved:**

That the presentation be noted.

## **7 Consumer Protection - Enforcement Activity**

The Chairman introduced the Council's Consumer Protection Manager, Owen Cleugh to give a presentation on Consumer Protection – Enforcement Activity (for copy see file of minutes).

The Consumer Protection Manager reminded Members that it had been one year since a restructure from previous arrangements that had Trading Standards and Licencing Issues to that of: Business Compliance; Special Investigations; Licensing Enforcement and Licensing Administration. It was noted that all teams were supported by an Intelligence and Information Team.

Members were asked to note national and local priorities included: doorstep crime; counterfeit goods; underage sales; illicit tobacco and alcohol; scams; and general fair trading issues.

Members noted in relation to doorstep crime examples were given in relation to dangerous and sub-standard structures in the County and learned as regards the types of activities related to doorstep crime, including home improvements; driveway installation and roofing amongst others. The Consumer Protection Manager added as regards help offered to victims of such crime; staff being trained in interview techniques; and activities relating to informing and educating such as an event in Durham in respect to traders and education and interventions via the Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) and Neighbourhood Wardens.

The Committee noted in relation to counterfeit goods examples as regards a number of activities prior to Christmas including: fake mobile phone covers; counterfeit designer goods; and fake electrical items and clothing.

It was explained that a new trend was for the sale of such items via hairdressing salons and barber shops and it was added that more frequently orders were being placed via social media, with less large quantities of stock being stored in any one location, and that how to tackle this in conjunction with the social media companies would be important.

Members were reminded of an individual who had been found to be selling fake “remembrance day poppies”, in contravention of copyright and also that seller had no connection to the Royal British Legion. The Consumer Protection Manager noted the individual had been issued with a Community Order.

Councillors noted that in terms of underage sales, there was still an issue and smarter intelligence was leading to higher failure rates on those premises targeted, proving the targeting was effective. It was noted there were referrals to Licensing Committee and that in appropriate cases there would be training packages offer to premises and their staff from the Police and the Council’s Licensing Team.

In connection to illicit tobacco and alcohol a number of examples of shops where such sales had taken place were given. It was explained that there had been a number of sanctions issued: including fines, closure orders and custodial sentences. It was emphasised that a new area of activity was vaping shops, in relation to age and product safety, both the liquids and charges used. Members were reminded of the work being in partnerships with the Police, Public Health and Local Members.

The Consumer Protection Manager noted that in relation to general scams, a recent case of fraud where two brothers were jailed for operating an internet scam. He added that scams could be via post, telephone and the internet, not just on the doorstep, and that there was a national “Friends Against Scams” organisation and that a pilot scheme had been developed involving three of the AAPs, helping to spread the messages about such scams and help in terms of community cohesion.

In terms of fair trading, Members were given examples in relation to: an electrician overcharging for works; car “clocking”, sales of second hand cars with altered mileage details; and illegal puppy farms, with a multiagency response in terms of looking at issues of pedigree and animal welfare.

The Consumer Protection Manager noted the statistics in relation to Licensing Committee hearings, and numbers of applications processed and reiterated the importance of this work in helping to protect public safety. The work in terms of licensing enforcement was explained, including drivers of dangerous vehicles where there was a risk to the public, and suspensions relating to behaviour, convictions or on medical grounds. Members noted the good work in conjunction with Durham Constabulary that had been carried out previously in relation to unregistered scrap metal collectors.

The Consumer Protection Manager noted the main risks and challenges faced by Consumer Protection, namely: the resources to investigate; increasing legal time and costs; maximising the potential of the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA); and encouraging people to come forward with information.

The Chairman thanked the Consumer Protection Manager and asked if having multiple agencies under one roof at Meadowfield was continuing to prove beneficial.

The Consumer Protection Manager noted that this was the case and was proving to work effectively with a number of Council staff trained and given clearance in appropriate areas and a “one-team” ethic was important in looking to utilise any method to target those carrying out the activities as previously described.

The Chairman asked Members for their comments and questions. Councillor C Wilson referred to the case relating to the electrician, the Consumer Protection Manager noted that the information was as reported in the press at the time.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor H Liddle asked if a taxi driver had their Durham licence revoked, could they go to another Local Authority area, obtain a licence and then operate in County Durham once again. The Consumer Protection Manager reminded Members of the changes following deregulation, the harmonisation of standards and a national register. He explained that if a licence was revoked in Durham, the information would be added to the register and other Local Authorities could check this. He added there was new consultation as regards taxi licensing that would be undertaken shortly.

Councillor A Patterson noted the positive successes in terms of enforcement action and seizures of counterfeit goods. She asked how prevention and educational work was undertaken, especially in terms of the allure of such items in the context of austerity. The Consumer Protection Manager explained that the messages of poor quality clothing items, perfumes that may cause allergic reactions, car parts and electrical goods that were dangerous were given and it was important to make consumers aware of the risks. He reiterated the point that social media was being used more and more for this type of activity. He explained that there was also a focus on not just counterfeit goods, but also in educating against scams as the victims can often be left facing multiple issues, not only financial, with some seeing their health and wellbeing affected. Members noted that organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch were very useful in these instances and in helping with community cohesion.

Councillor J Charlton asked as regards underage sales and the training being offered, asking whether this could not be a stipulation at the licence issuing stage. The Consumer Protection Manager noted that for new applications there was the opportunity for a Licensing Committee to impose more stringent conditions or training requirements if felt appropriate in a particular instance.

Councillor J Charlton asked as regards scrap metal dealers and the current position. The Consumer Protection Manager noted the work that had been undertaken previously, with a number of prosecutions in relation to collectors and sites. He added that Neighbourhood Wardens continued to work in helping to identify issues such as fly-tipping and of those individuals operating without a waste carrier’s licence. He noted that there was a benefit to the both the public and legitimate waste carriers having increased trust in those operating within the law.

**Resolved:**

That the report and presentation be noted.

## **8 Progress of Recommendations following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Cybercrime**

The Chairman reiterated his thanks to the Vice-Chairman, Councillor H Liddle who had chaired the scrutiny review in 2017/18 looking at the issue of cybercrime. Councillor H Liddle explained that upon speaking to young people and professionals it was noted that many young people perceived cybercrime as a victimless crime and she had hoped that the review would help highlight that it was not victimless and had the potential to impact on many people's lives. She also thanked all the Officers involved for their hard work.

The Chairman asked the Strategic Manager – Partnerships, Andrea Petty to speak to Members as regards an update in relation to the recommendations from the review.

The Strategic Manager – Partnerships noted that there had been a number of areas of activity, including: an awareness video created by New College Durham students in relation to cybercrime; the Portfolio Holder, Councillor J Allen speaking at the Local Government Association Conference as regards the work undertaken in County Durham, with a number of other Local Authorities having taken a keen interest.

Councillors noted the partners involved in the work carried out in Durham included Durham Constabulary, the North East Serious Operations Unit (NESOU), the University of Sunderland and the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP), more specifically the now established Safer Cyber Task Group. Members were reminded that within the Scrutiny Review, there was a focus session held with Police Cadets, helping to get a perspective from young people as regards how cybercrime was perceived.

The Strategic Manager – Partnerships referred Members to appendix two to the report setting out an update of progress against each of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review. In relation to the prevention of people becoming cybercrime offenders being an action of the SDP, this led to the creation of the Safer Cyber Task Group with an associated Action Plan. Members also noted a number of activities in relation to this including: awareness raising via the NESOU and Watersons; community based initiatives involving the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner (PCVC), Durham Constabulary and AAPs; and utilising existing events and roadshows, such as BikeWise to help spread messages in relation to staying safe online.

Councillors noted the recommendation in terms of further focus sessions with Police Cadets and young people and added an initial session with Cadets and their parents had taken place and that further work was ongoing to develop a comprehensive programme in conjunction with the Cadets.

The Strategic Manager – Partnerships explained in terms of the third recommendation from the review, relating to research that had been conducted by the University of Bath looking at any potential links between autism and cybercrime, following enquires with the university as regards a final report, no further information had been forthcoming.

Members noted the work ongoing in terms of recommendation four, with Children and Young People's Services taking an active role in helping keep the young people of County Durham safe, working with teachers and young people.

It was noted that the Council were working with New College Durham to develop a new resource for use in schools, as well as the wider community, to promote a better understanding of the issues and highlight the consequences of hacking and potential benefits of pursuing a positive career utilising those types of computing skills.

In terms of the fifth recommendation from the Review, the Strategic Manager – Partnerships explained that the issue of cybercrime and cyber safety had been added to the Safety Carousel events at secondary schools and in the work of The Prince's Trust.

Members were reminded of the sixth recommendation relating to the production of a video resource that could be shown, in conjunction with the resource made available by the National Crime Agency, to highlight to young people the risks associated with cybercrime. It was explained that work with New College Durham students, supported by the Children and Young People's Service, the Council's Partnerships Team, Overview and Scrutiny and Durham Constabulary had resulted in a draft script which contained both positive and negative endings. It was added that production would begin and a launch event was anticipated for April 2019.

The Strategic Manager – Partnerships noted that the seventh recommendation of the Review Group had been in reference to exploring opportunities for apprenticeships in IT/Cybersecurity. It was noted that that six IT apprentices had been taken on by the Council, with one specialising in cyber security and that apprentice having given a very inspirational presentation to the SDP Safer Cyber Task Group.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Manager – Partnerships and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor D Stoker asked as regards further information in terms of the lack of response from the University of Bath. The Strategic Manager – Partnerships noted several attempts had been made to contact the University and the relevant staff with no response.

Councillor J Charlton asked if cybercrime would be an item that would remain on the agenda for the Committee. The Chairman noted that it would, with the review having shown that there was a need to help divert young people away from the negative aspects that such skills could lead to, and to help focus on highlighting the opportunities for people with those skills to become successful.

Councillor J Turnbull noted he had attended one of the "business breakfasts" organised as regards cybercrime and highlighted that it had been very positive, with a good deal of valuable information for Members.

The Chairman concluded by noting the positive outcomes of this review activity led by Cllr Liddle and the Committee and gave commendation to the Overview and Scrutiny Officer for his work in supporting the Committee with this review.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That a progress report on development of recommendations from the review be included within the Committee's work programme.

## **9 Progress of Recommendations following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Home Safety - Safe and Wellbeing Visits**

The Chairman introduced the Strategic Manager – Public Health, Chris Woodcock to speak in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Home Safety – Safe and Wellbeing Visits (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager – Public Health reminded the Committee of the review undertaken in conjunction with the CDDFRS and Public Health in terms of Safe and Wellbeing Visits (SWVs) and noted that the evaluation that had been completed by the Teesside University on the SWV initiative, as set out at appendix two to the report.

The Committee noted that the review had made several recommendations, including in terms of: annual review via the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) as regards the SWV framework document; information sharing protocols and making best use of data collected; ongoing monitoring of the SWVs via the SDP and Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) and communication of outcomes with Firefighters; quality assurance in terms of the SWVs, including via the evaluation undertaken and focus groups with staff to feedback operationally as regards issues such as ongoing training and assessing whether pathways being utilised were fit for purpose. The Strategic Manager – Public Health noted that there had been value established in several areas, and example being that of interventions in cases of falls and issues of loneliness.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Manager – Public Health and reminded Members that former Councillor and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, T Nearney had chaired the review and had commented on the importance of the work and the ability of Firefighters to be able to get people engaged and willing to talk about several issues, due to their trusted high standing with the public and their high levels of skill and training. The Chairman asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor J Considine noted that in her local village there as a project being undertaken looking at the issue of social isolation and noted that recommendation two of the review had noted local data that may be useful in relation to this project. The Strategic Manager – Public Health noted that there was the framework in place, giving an overview, however he was not sure that the SWV information was broken down at that level. He added that Public Health information in relation to isolation may be available at the ward level and he could look at this further.

The Chairman asked as regards communication of the information sharing protocol as he had noted that members of the Community Action Team (CAT), when dealing with an issue in his Division, had been unaware of the protocol. The Strategic Manager – Public Health noted this would be an issue raised as regards awareness within the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) and with partners.

Councillor A Patterson noted that several of the AAPs were looking at the issue of social isolation and the report may be useful for those AAPs.

Councillor J Charlton asked who Members should contact as regards SWVs, was it their local Community Fire Station. The Strategic Manager – Public Health noted that he would look into this issue.

Councillor J Turnbull noted that he had attended SWVs with the CDDFRS and that he felt they had been a great success, targeting areas where issues had been flagged up from other data sources. He added that the Firefighters from the CDDFRS were well respected and trusted by the public.

Chief Superintendent A Green noted the comment in terms of some Officers from partner organisations not being aware of the information sharing protocol did not mean information was not being shared effectively.

He explained that data that was shared automatically and information was utilised to make the relevant referrals to partners such as Age Concern or Public Health where appropriate. He added that the data was very useful in this respect and reassured the Committee that the information was being shared as per the protocol in place.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that as Members had received several updates in relation to the recommendations of the review the Committee was asked to confirm that they were happy to sign off the review of the recommendations as being completed.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That the review of the report recommendations be noted as completed.

**10 Overview and Scrutiny Review Update:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update in relation to the review activities of the Committee.

It was explained in respect of the Joint Working Group with the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to Private Children's Residential Care Homes work was ongoing and that the last meeting in January had looked at the relevant regulations and legislation associated with Children's Residential Care Homes. Members noted additional meetings would be scheduled to look at issues, including the Chairman of the Working Group, Councillor H Smith, to attend a Children's Homes Managers' meeting.

**Resolved:**

That the verbal update be noted.

**11 Police and Crime Panel**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update report in respect of the Police and Crime Panel (PCP), noting issues considered at the last meeting of the Panel included: consultation in relation to the Council Tax Police Precept 2019/20 and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). It was added that there had been a report in relation to campaign activity, with issues that linked to the work of the Committee, an example given being Selective Licensing.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that links to the relevant reports that had been considered would be circulated to Members, adding that a couple of items had been deferred as the meeting was curtailed due to the inclement weather.

**Resolved:**

That the verbal update be noted.