

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 **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 9 July 2021** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Charlton (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Avery, V Andrews, P Atkinson, J Cairns, S Deinali, L Fenwick, C Hampson, P Heaviside, M McGaun, E Mavin, D Nicholls, D Oliver, J Quinn, D Sutton-Lloyd and M Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Balls

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D McKenna and C Martin and Chief Fire Officer S Errington, Chief Superintendent A Green and Mr A J Cooke.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held 1 March 2021 and were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

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 Quarter Four, 2020/21 Performance Management Report

The Chair asked the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager, Tom Gorman to provide the Committee with an update in relation to the Quarter Four, 2020/21 Performance Management Report (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager thanked the Chair and referred Members to the information as set out within the report pack. He added that as the report related to Quarter Four it also represented a year-end position which would include any impact from the COVID-19 pandemic. He explained that the report included performance information relevant to the remit of the Committee, including community safety elements under the “Connected Communities” and substance misuse performance information relating to “People Live Long and Independent Lives”. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager explained that in addition there was the role of the Committee in scrutinising the Safer Durham Partnership (SDP), with the Chair of the SDP, K Wanley being in attendance to give Members an update at the next item.

Councillors were referred to the information within the report and asked to note there was a 12 percent reduction in recorded crime, year of year, with around 6,000 fewer offences and with theft offences down by one-third. It was noted this was felt to be as a result of the pandemic, with fewer people moving about there were fewer opportunities for crime, less vehicle journeys, and with non-essential shops being closed and more people working from home shoplifting and burglary offences had reduced. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager explained that there had been an increase in anti-social behaviour (ASB), with a 14 percent increase in total, being ASB reported to the Police or Council. He added that some new offences as a result of the Coronavirus Act 2020 were recorded as ASB, with 23 percent of all ASB reported to the Police relating to the Coronavirus Act, for example illegal gatherings. It was noted that the increase in the reports to the Council mainly related to those associated with people being in their homes more, such as noise nuisance.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager noted fly-tipping had increased by 22 percent and explained the Council’s Household Waste Recycling Centres had been required to close in response to the first national lockdown and, upon reopening, social distancing had meant increased queues in order to access the centres.

In respect of deliberate fires, the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) area had the highest number of deliberate primary fires and the third highest number of secondary deliberate fires.

It was added that areas with the second and third highest number of primary fires were Tyne and Wear and Cleveland, with Cleveland and Tyne and Wear being first and second in terms of secondary deliberate fires, highlighting that it was also a regional issue. It was noted that within the CDDFRS area, 68 percent of deliberate primary fires related to vehicles, an increase of 12 percent from the previous year.

In respect of reducing substance misuse, it was noted that the Council's Drug and Alcohol Service had improved performance, with performance relating to alcohol just behind the national figures. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager explained that in relation to opiate drugs, performance was around the national level, and in relation to non-opiates there had been a similar improvement to that of alcohol services.

Members were referred to statistics relating to domestic violence and the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager noted that the number of incidents involving alcohol had increased. He explained that the Domestic Abuse Bill 2021 was being considered by Parliament which looked to grant new powers for the Police and place new duties on Local Authorities. He noted that further information would follow once the Bill had obtained Royal Assent.

In relation to road safety, the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager noted figures for the last three years showed a variable picture, with a decreasing long-term trend in terms of the number of people killed or seriously injured. He added that the first national lockdown of the pandemic had seen a reducing of 22 percent in the number killed or seriously injured, likely as a result of decreased traffic. He noted, however, that one death was too many, adding the topic was one the Committee had looked at previously. Members were reminded that engineering works are very rarely needed, rather education was a key focus of the road safety partnership in terms of the "Fatal Four", use of mobile phones while driving, speeding, and drug/drink driving.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager and asked Members for their comments and questions, adding Members could submit any further questions they may have via e-mail should they wish.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

7 Safe Durham Partnership

The Chair welcomed the Area Manager, Community Risk Management, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, Keith Wanley in his capacity as the Chair of the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) Board and noted he was in attendance to provide the Committee with an update presentation as regards the work of the SDP.

The Chair, SDP thanked the Committee and referred to the presentation set out within the agenda papers. He noted how the SDP fitted in with the wider partnership picture in County Durham and how priorities were aligned with the three key ambitions from the County Durham Vision 2035, and elements supported by the SDP included: future free from harm due to drug and alcohol misuse; make sure Children and Young People are safe (alongside the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership); Support for victims to cope, recover and engage in the justice system; work with communities most affected by long term empty properties; approach to selective licensing of private landlords; tackle crime and ASB; address the underlying causes of crime and community tensions; actively take steps to encourage community cohesion; and provide a range of activities and opportunities to divert people away from crime and ASB.

Members noted that following feedback from the Committee, the SDP Vision had been updated slightly, 'To deliver outcomes to ensure 'Durham is a county where every adult and child will feel and be safe'. The Chair, SDP referred Members to a diagram highlighting how the SDP fitted in to the wider County Durham Partnership (CDP) and with links to wider partnership arrangements and links to other groups such as the Criminal Justice Board and the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillors were reminded of the sub-groups of the SDP, namely: Hate Crime Action Group; Silver Contest Group; Reducing Reoffending Group; Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG); County Durham and Darlington Road Safety Partnership; and Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Group. The Chair, SDP noted that the SDP was a statutory function as required by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, with its membership being from Local Authority Members, with the Vice-Chair being the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety. It was explained that partners included: CDDFRS; Durham County Council, including Cabinet Members and Senior Officers from relevant Services; Durham Constabulary; Probation Service; Clinical Commissioning Group; County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust; Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust; HMP Durham; Office of the Police, Crime & Victims' Commissioner; Voluntary and Community Sector; and Chairs of SDP Board Sub-groups, when required.

The Chair, SDP noted responsibilities of the SDP included: to provide strategic level leadership for community safety; to commission and co-ordinate the strategic assessment (evidence base); delivering on the Safe Durham Partnership Plan; to oversee and monitor performance; to ensure information sharing protocols are in place; to consult the community to inform the Partnership Plan; to work with the Council's Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee; to commission Domestic Homicide Reviews; and to work in partnership, pooling resources where needed. He added that it was therefore important to have senior level involvement at the SDP Board to enable a good strategic overview. He noted that it was also important to be evidence based, with Durham Insight providing a wealth of statistics to help deliver against the SDP Plan and to monitor performance. It was explained that there had been a recent review of performance indicators, with some information having been provided in the report presented by the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager.

The Committee were informed that protocols and arrangements relating to information sharing were being refreshed and would be reported to the next meeting of the SDP Board. The Chair, SDP noted that the SDP Plan had been refreshed, including feedback from the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He noted that strategic priorities in terms of delivering against 'promote being safe and feeling safe in your community' included: ASB; arson / deliberate fires; safer homes; road safety; hate crime; and community tension. Members noted the Committee had asked for arson / deliberate fires to be listed separately from ASB so that each could be focussed upon. Members noted other strategic priorities included: support victims and protect vulnerable people from harm; Prevent Strategy: Countering Terrorism, Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (amended wording following feedback from Members); reduce reoffending; alcohol and substance misuse reduction; tackle and prevent cyber enabled crime.

The Chair, SDP noted that recent areas of focus had included: tackling ASB, investigating using a strategic place based model; developing the refreshed SDP Plan 2021-2025; work of the newly formed Arson Suppression Group and the implementation of the Arson Reduction Strategy; understanding the changes within the new Probation service and how this would affect service delivery; progress of the CONTEST Silver Group on preventing people being drawn into terrorism and the work to strengthen our protection against terrorist attacks; progress of the Alcohol and Drugs Harm Reduction Action Plan; and the Road Safety Strategy and Casualty Reduction.

The Committee were informed that future agenda items included: a deep dive into Hate crime; referral routes from MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference for domestic abuse); work of the MAPS (Multi-Agency Problem Solving groups); nuisance motorcycle and quad bikes action plan; housing update, including - Private Landlord licensing, supported housing for rough sleepers, The Safe to Stay initiative and the work of the rough sleeper team; and the Safer Cyber Working Group Annual update.

The Chair thanked the Chair, SDP and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor L Fenwick asked why drug and alcohol misuse seemed to be low on the priority list, noting she felt many crimes in the area were linked to such misuse. The Chair, SDP noted that drug and alcohol misuse was cross-cutting with a number of issues, including ASB, arson, safer homes and domestic abuse. He noted the way in which the priorities were set out within the presentation was not an order of priority, with each being equally as important and having specific sub-groups to look at each area.

Councillor P Atkinson asked as regards any focus groups that were set up by the SDP, the frequency of their meetings and who those groups comprised of.

The Chair, SDP noted that the make-up of each would be different depending upon the specific issue, however, would look to include relevant partners that could add value to the process. He noted each would have a Chair and would meet as many times as required. He added that the SDP provided strategic leadership with the sub-groups reporting back to demonstrate they were delivering against the strategic priorities of the SDP Plan, as build into the performance framework to provide the opportunity for scrutiny, with the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager having given some details within his presentation. The Chair, SDP noted he could provide details of the groups for the Member.

Councillor D Sutton-Lloyd asked if any extra work was being undertaken in relation to suicide rates, as impacted upon by the pandemic. The Partnerships Team Leader, Andy Bailey noted that suicide prevention fell under the remit of the Health and Wellbeing agenda, alongside mental health issues. The Chair, SDP noted that was therefore a different board to the SDP, the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Councillor D Nicholls noted he was impressed with the decision to separate arson and deliberate fires from ASB in order to get a more accurate picture of the situation, noting it was an issue in his Electoral Division with fires linked to fly-tipping. He noted reference within the presentation to Coronavirus matters being classed as ASB and asked if Members could be provided with a breakdown by area, as he noted several anti-vaccine / anti-guidance posters had been put up in certain areas. The Chair, SDP asked if the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager could provide more information. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager noted that the Council would have information relating to fly-posting and the Police would have ASB information, and he would look to provide Members with further details.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

8 Refresh of the Work Programme 2021/22

The Chairman asked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee to speak to Members in relation to the refresh of the Work Programme 2021/22 for the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that the report highlighted the links to the County Vision and the SDP and set out the work that had been undertaken by the Committee within the past year, including remote meetings, and also looked forward to the forthcoming year. It was added that the report referred to the link of the Committee with the Police and Crime Panel.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted the report set out suggested areas for consideration within the Work Programme and he explained that Senior Officers or Chairs of the SDP sub-groups would attend Committee to report back on their specific areas. He added that the report referred to issues highlighted by the previous Committee as being possible areas for consideration in the Work Programme, including ASB linked to off-road bikes and substance misuse reduction. He noted that there had also been a suggestion to revisit previous areas of work, including the partnership work undertaken to tackle arson in the east of the County.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted the future dates of the Committee meeting were yet to be finalised, however, the Work Programme would be flexible in order to include any items that may appear within the year.

The Chair thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer and noted that if any questions came to Members after the meeting, they could contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer directly.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree the Work Programme 2021/22 and the flexibility it offers to respond to emerging issues.