

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 **Wednesday 2 March 2022** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Charlton (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors P Heaviside, V Andrews, P Atkinson, D Boyes, L Fenwick, C Hampson, M McGaun, D McKenna, C Martin, E Mavin, D Nicholls, J Quinn, D Sutton-Lloyd and M Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Balls

Co-opted Employees/Officers:

Superintendent N Bickford and Chief Fire Officer S Errington

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Cairns, J Miller and Mr A J Cooke and Mr T Cooke.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the chair.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer informed members of the following:

- The response containing comments from the Committee to the consultation had been submitted to County Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Service;

- That the Committee are to receive an update report on anti-social behaviour as a standard agenda item following comments to the presentation on Community Protection Service;
- The Committee's comments on the agenda items, Community Protection Service and Nuisance Motorbikes and Quads – Time Limited Action Plan had been forwarded to the Safe Durham Partnership Board, Cabinet Portfolio holder and relevant Council Service Groupings.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Safer Cyber

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided background information on activity of the Safe Durham Partnership's Safer Cyber group (for copy see file of minutes).

The Detective Inspector, Durham Constabulary and the Strategic Manager, Durham County Council gave a presentation which provided an overview of the activity of the Safe Durham Partnership's Safer Cyber group including its remit, achievements to date and future work activity.

Councillor Boyes referred to the hack video that was produced by the students of New College Durham and commented that it was a good production. In addition, Cllr Boyes highlighted that the report did not make any reference to the dark web and raised his concerns regarding its accessibility for drugs. In response, the Detective Inspector confirmed that there was a dedicated team for dark web intelligence.

In relation to the cyber-crime report that had been produced in 2018, which included information on young people at schools whose expertise in IT hacking had been positively utilised to help improve fire walls for businesses, Councillor Boyes asked if there was any information available to confirm the number of young people who had been deterred. The Detective Inspector agreed to report back to Members with this data.

Councillor Quinn referred to the Cyber Safety Event that had taken place at New College Durham and asked whether they had received any feedback from the students. He commented that young people generally have the most knowledge when it comes to IT and wanted to ensure that they were not being taught what they already knew. He went on to ask about password protection and if pass phrases were being promoted.

The Detective Inspector confirmed that pass phrases were being used. In terms of feedback, he explained that some difficult subject areas had been delivered to the students and that the feedback had been positive.

Superintendent Bickford asked what the biggest strategic risk was for the region.

The Detective Inspector believed that the cyber-attack at Durham Johnson School was only the tip of the iceberg and stated that more attacks would happen. He explained that businesses needed to protect themselves from cyber-attacks and advised that information on how to do so was available. He agreed to share this information via the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

Councillor Nicholls emphasised the importance of raising awareness of this issue and stated that it could happen to anyone. He expressed that some people had suffered with mental health and wellbeing because of cyber-crime and he was pleased that this area was being targeted.

In addition, Councillor Nicholls expressed his concerns with ransomware attacks and commented that the attack on Durham Johnston School highlighted that it was not only national infrastructures like the NHS who were affected by this. He asked what help was needed to tackle the issue. The Detective Inspector advised that ransomware attacks were a national problem and that this was part of a national strategy, he noted that funding had been given to address this.

Councillor Nicholls commented on high street banks within the context that branches were closing and therefore the approach to traditional banking had changed and asked how they were working with the banks and whether banks were being forced on-line. The Detective Inspector advised that the police had set up various protocols with regards to on-line banking with an example where large amounts of money had been withdrawn. He explained that if someone was scammed, the police would provide wrap around safeguarding and added that banks were good at re-imbursing those people affected if evidence of fraud was provided.

Mr D Balls asked whether any cyber-attacks from Russia were anticipated. The Detective Inspector confirmed that he was unable to answer that question but that prevention work and raising awareness were key to deal with any potential threat.

Councillor Quinn asked about punishments for cyber-crime and whether the punishment matched the crime committed. The Detective Inspector confirmed that they did and advised that there was currently a Police and Crime Online Safety Bill going through parliament which included information on this subject.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd stated that he was interested in what people were putting into the community at grass route level and how they could improve partnership working to promote this. The Detective Inspector agreed. He stated that there was a good footprint in education but that the footprint in youth clubs was not as good and advised that they were working closely with neighbourhood policing teams regarding this area. He encouraged members to contact his team if there were any areas in their ward where this could be helped. Councillor Sutton-Lloyd suggested that this could encourage cohesion between the generations. The Strategic

Manager commented that Age UK Beat the Scammers had linked in with their team.

Councillor Mavin raised his concerns that cyber-crime was increasing.

Councillor Atkinson asked whether the team, if requested, would be able to give a presentation at a local community group. The Detective Inspector agreed that they would encourage this and explained that they had been doing some work with Durham University and welcomed ongoing community work.

Councillor Heaviside commented that a recent presentation given in the Chester-le-Street area regarding scams had been very helpful.

Councillor Charlton advised that not all parents were technically minded and noted that some were unable to secure the equipment their teenage children used. She asked whether any help could be given to these parents. The Detective Inspector advised that the issue was education and explained that there was a vast amount of information available on the internet regarding this area.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer agreed to share with members the link to the hack video from New College Durham, the information document containing links to cyber security advice and contact details for the Detective Inspector's team.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

6 Road Safety

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided background information on Road Safety (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Traffic Manager and the Road Safety Manager gave a presentation which provided an overview of partnership activity that contributed to the delivery of the Safe Durham Partnership Plan priority 'promote being safe and feeling safe in your community'. It highlighted the following objectives:

- Provide a coordinated approach;
- Aim to maintain a downward trend;
- Specifically target those road user groups over-represented in casualty statistics;
- Improve safety;
- Promote and encourage safer, healthier modes of travel;
- Reduce the burden of road casualties.

Councillor Boyes referred to the decrease of road casualty statistics and asked how these were being recorded. The Strategic Traffic Manager advised that a STATS19 form was completed by the Police to record personal injury and that 'damage only' was not reported and could not be used as a dataset.

In terms of specific groups at risk, Councillor Boyes observed that deprived areas were not included in the presentation. He stated that accidents within deprived areas often occurred due to drivers who had not passed their test, cars being unsafe, texting whilst driving, drug use and asked if there was any way of identifying whether deprived areas did incur more accidents and what the causes of the accidents were.

The Road Safety Manager explained that there were heat maps that could identify where the problems were and that these could be filtered by age, male, female and down to postcode level. She advised that the heat maps were very informative and agreed to circulate some up-to-date maps to Members via the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd welcomed the pro-active approach to road safety and stated the importance of this area of work. He raised his concerns regarding the drive forward of housing developments and the creation of new rat runs and felt more forward planning was needed with regards to this. The Strategic Traffic Manager explained that this came down to planning applications and that there would need to be severe harm for it to be objected on the grounds of highways. He advised that they worked hard to achieve sustainable transport and ensured bus stops were introduced but agreed to feed this information back to the Development Management area team.

In response to a question from Councillor Sutton-Lloyd regarding the proliferation of road signs, the Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that new road layout signs should only be up for 90 days and advised members to contact him if they were aware of signs that had been up for longer than this period. He acknowledged that an exercise to declutter signs was necessary but that resources were needed to undertake this activity.

In relation to the reporting of accidents, Councillor McGaun asked whether near misses were reported to 101. He expressed that wait times for reporting were lengthy and felt that the statistics presented were not a true reflection. The Strategic Traffic Manager confirmed that as only personal injury accidents were recorded, the statistics would not be affected.

In response to a further question from Councillor McGaun regarding preventing accidents in areas that were perceived as dangerous, the Strategic Traffic Manager explained that funding was limited and that this had to be directed to known areas where accidents were happening rather than to potentially dangerous areas.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd commented further to the reporting of accidents and expressed the importance of being proactive rather than reactive.

Councillor McGaun asked about Accelerate training programme and whether this was being advertised. The Road Safety manager explained that Accelerate was partly funded from speed awareness courses but that the funding for this ceased

prior to Covid. She advised that their instructors were still available, but that they no longer had the funding to train young drivers.

In relation to the causation factors, Councillor McGaun asked why 'drink/drug driving' and 'impaired by alcohol' were two separate factors. He also commented that he had seen an increase in drivers with the front registration plate being displayed on the dashboard. He asked whether this was acceptable and whether it affected identification for speed cameras.

The Strategic Traffic Manager clarified that 'drink/drug driving' related to drivers, whereas 'impaired by alcohol' could also relate to pedestrians. In terms of the registration plate, he explained that this was a Police matter but that there was zero tolerance for this and advised that a speed camera would still pick up the rear registration plate.

Councillor Quinn asked why the process to convict a drug driver took longer than the process to convict a drink driver. Superintendent Bickford clarified that alcohol could be detected by a breath test, however a blood sample was needed to detect drugs and that testing for this was considerably longer and more costly.

In response to a further question from Councillor Quinn regarding off road bikes, the Strategic Traffic Manager advised that this area was included in 'nuisance motorcycles' and that these should be reported to the police. He agreed to share the relevant e-mail address for reporting this via the Overview and Scrutiny Officer. The Road Safety Manager explained that they were carrying out work through a an initiative called Operation Endurance and that this targeted any specific areas that had a problem with off road bikes.

Councillor Nicholls echoed the concerns raised regarding off road bikes and asked whether information could be shared between the relevant committees. Councillor Charlton confirmed that the subject had been presented to the Committee, anti-social behaviour would remain on the agenda for future meetings and that updates would be shared as necessary.

Councillor Martin commented on the positivity of the decrease in road casualties but stated that people within his ward still feared the dangers of the highway and that they felt there was not enough enforcement. He appreciated the constraints on resources but asked if residents' fears were included in the new strategy. The Road Safety Manager agreed and advised that they were working with the AAP's regarding this and stated she believed there was work that could be done at a grassroots level to reassure the safety residents.

Superintendent Bickford agreed that speeding was a great concern for residents and advised that community speed watch had been positive in areas of the County to address these concerns.

Councillor Atkinson asked a question regarding the implementation of low-level highway improvements and the refreshing of road markings and asked what the

process was to request these. The Strategic Traffic Manager clarified that data was analysed to highlight the areas that needed to be targeted but stated that if a member would like to fund a specific area that this could be requested.

In response to a further question from Councillor Atkinson regarding speeding, the Strategic Traffic Manager advised that any issues should be reported to the local PACT meeting.

Further to a comment raised regarding 20mph zones at schools, Councillor Charlton confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Officer would circulate briefing notes which clarified the rationale for some areas of the County being 20mph and some not.

The Strategic Traffic Manager explained that analysis was done at schools in the county and that cars travelling greater than 24mph met the criteria for a 20mph zone to be introduced. He advised that they would support the introduction of additional zones providing they were externally funded.

Councillor Mavin asked if 20mph zones seen at schools could be rolled out in all areas of the County. The Strategic Traffic Manager commented that a great deal of signage would be required, and he did not believe the zones would be effective.

Councillor Fenwick pointed out the shortage of school crossing patrols in the County and asked if there was anything that could be done to drive recruitment for these roles. The Road Safety Manager advised that these roles were difficult to fill due to the hours involved. She explained that it was a national problem and noted the role was not statutory. She advised that success with recruitment had been found when working in partnership with schools and that there was continual advertisement for the jobs along with raising awareness via social media and the Durham County News magazine.

Councillor Boyes commented on the Road Traffic Carousel training course that was previously available to school children aged 15 and 16 and explained the positive education this instilled in the new generation of drivers and asked if it was possible to reinstate this training.

The Road Safety Manager agreed that the workshops covered a whole raft of education for drivers to enable them to be more independent, but that funding was no longer available. She advised that their team could facilitate some sessions in schools but that it was not possible for it to be on the same scale as the previous course due to funding. The Strategic Traffic Manager advised that this training course had been replaced by the safer futures initiative.

In response to a question from Councillor Nicholls regarding parking on footpaths due to lack of space available. The Strategic Traffic Manager advised that this was a police matter and that they would determine whether the vehicle was causing an obstruction.

Councillor Nicholls raised his concerns about the lack of communication with residents where work was planned to be carried out. He also asked what the time scale was to change the speed restriction in a specific area if this was requested. The Strategic Traffic Manager explained that their team was currently experiencing staffing issues which had impacted on some areas of work but that he was hopeful vacant posts would soon be filled. In relation to speed restrictions, he advised that they were not always changed, despite being requested.

In response to a question asked by Councillor Heaviside regarding speed visors. The Strategic Traffic Manager confirmed that studies had shown that vehicles reduced their speed by 1.4mph and advised that the visors were rotated. He explained that the cost of a visor was £12,000 for a five-year period.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.