

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 21 April 2022** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Charlton (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors V Andrews, D Boyes, J Cairns, L Fenwick, C Hampson, D McKenna, C Martin, E Mavin, J Miller, D Oliver, J Quinn, A Simpson, D Sutton-Lloyd, M Wilson, E Peeke and L Hovvels

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Balls

Co-opted Employees/Officers:

Superintendent N Bickford and Chief Fire Officer S Errington

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Heaviside and P Atkinson

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Atkinson, P Heaviside, M McGaun and D Nicholls.

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chair announced that the Council were currently undertaking a recruitment exercise for co-opted members and thanked both Mr David Balls and Mr Tony Cooke for their service to the Committee as this was the last scheduled meeting of the Committee for this municipal year.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor E Peeke for M McGaun and Councillor L Hovvels for D Nicholls.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 March 2022

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

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

6 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategic Group

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provide an update on the first meeting of the re-established ASB Strategic Group, it's priorities and work areas (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Community Protection Services gave a detailed report on the background, the aims of the re-established group, its objectives, membership, and outcomes from the first meeting.

Councillor Hovvels commented that she found it frustrating that given the amount of member intelligence around ASB that they were not part of the CASBRAC group and able to feed into and receive information from about their local areas. The Head of Community Protection Services appreciated that there was an issue of underreporting and agreed that a mechanism to gather that community-based intelligence was important and would take the comments back to the group.

Councillor Boyes commented that he was pleased to see that this area of work was being reviewed as he was aware that there had previously been a lot of duplication and noted that a single point of contact for reporting incidents of ASB was key to achieving a clear route for members of the public to take. The Head of Community Protection Services advised how data was collected and how confidence was subsequently restored was a key challenge for the group to take forward, noting that a single point of contact was important, however there needed to be a roadmap of accountability and confidential reporting lines through the police.

Superintendent N Bickford, Durham Constabulary added that he completely agreed, the current arrangements were complex, however appreciated that this group would look to streamline those forums with a view to have a single approach for reporting, including triage.

Further discussion took place regarding reporting in rural areas and Councillor Andrews noted that confidence was a major reason for underreporting. She felt that building that confidence on the community was key. The Head of Community

Protection Services added that all partners needed to take accountability for this area and noted that developing this approach would look to show how the community can help themselves by reporting incidents which would bolster data.

Councillor Miller noted that he was concerned that members were not involved in the CRASBAC process and asked that this be looked into further. Superintendent N Bickford commented that he couldn't see a reason why this input would not be permitted and agreed that he would review this area in further detail.

Further discussion took place regarding representation noting that within the remit and scope of the partnership group and the Head of Community Protection Services advised that it was key to ensure that the key people from the right organisations were represented. The Head of Community Protection Services further explained that the Community Trigger was operated under Home Office Guidance, however noted the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) pledge to review this alongside the 101 number. She agreed to seek further details on the PCC review and provide to members following the meeting.

Councillor Sutton Lloyd noted that the current arrangements were fragmented and welcomed a more co-ordinated effort, with member involvement.

Councillor McKenna made reference to the community trigger, noting that he felt the current reporting trigger was too slow of a reaction. In addition, he felt that this was important given the issues with the 101 number. Superintendent N Bickford, Durham Constabulary clarified that this was indeed a national process from the Home Office and noted the complexities surrounding it and the way in which much of the work was duplicated.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

7 Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 - Prevent Update

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources and presentation of Detective Sergeant Rielly, Durham Constabulary and A Bailey, Partnerships Team Leader and Prevent Support Officer, DCC which provided an overview of the Partnership's progress in meeting the statutory duties contained within the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and an update on partnership working (for copy see file of Minutes).

The presentation delivered by Detective Sergeant Reilly provided an overview of the definition of Terrorism within the Terrorism Act 2000, including how the UK Counter Terrorism Strategy known as CONTEST aimed to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism. In addition, the Prevent Strategy 2011 aimed to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism, noting that the delivery of Prevent was grounded in early intervention and safeguarding.

The presentation highlighted how partnership working through the 'Channel Panel' formed a key part of Prevent and adopted a multi-agency approach to identify and support individuals who were vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. He explained that there were two Channel Panels in the Durham Constabulary area and in Durham the panel was chaired by the Head of Adult Care.

In addition to the above it was explained that further partnership working was undertaken through the Silver Contest Board which was in place to assist partners to implement the Prevent Duty, maintain oversight of the Extremism agenda and deliver the Strategic Delivery Plan. In addition, it supported the Channel program, received, and reviewed intelligence, engaged in commissioning processes and initiated activity to address key points contained in the CTLP.

Detective Sergeant Rielly provided further detail regarding the UK Terrorism Threat Level and UK Terrorism Statistics.

A Bailey, Partnerships Team Leader and Prevent Support Officer then went on to detail the role of Durham County Council and the partnership work the team were involved in.

Councillor Boyes commented that he understood that younger vulnerable people were at risk of being drawn into terrorism and was pleased to hear that there was a focus on young people and that further education partners were on board. He also noted that he was aware that the biggest risk in County Durham came from far-right organisations.

Detective Sergeant Rielly agreed that far-right extremism was the predominant concern in County Durham and prevent-based training tailored to fit with the demographic was crucial, especially in schools. He explained that during the early stages of the COVID pandemic an online session had been held, which had been attended by over 100 schools and was to be held again this coming Summer as it had proved so successful.

Councillor Miller asked if there was a reason why the Fire Service were not represented on the Channel Panel. In response it was explained that the fire service did attend meetings on an ad-hoc basis but did provide engagement in respect of work undertaken with the Silver Contest Group. Chief Fire Officer S Errington, County Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Service confirmed that he was comfortable with the existing arrangements and it worked well under the current arrangements.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd asked if there was anything that could be done to help get advice and messages out into the community. A Bailey, Partnerships Team Leader and Prevent Support Officer advised that he was the point of contact for training and he would be willing to offer free Prevent training for those third sector organisations.

In conclusion Detective Sergeant Rielly noted that in this area of work you could never become complacent, he expected that teams working in counterterrorism would continue to grow, with further funding to support their work as education was key to ensuring that the issue was being talked about, recognised and the campaigns currently running were excellent for highlighting these messages in the community.

Resolved: That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

8 Probation Service

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources and presentation of Karen Blackburn, Head of County Durham, and Darlington Probation Service, which provided an overview of delivery of probation services within County Durham following the transition to one probation service in June 2021 (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

K Blackburn provided details of the work which had been undertaken since the last update to the committee in January 2021, noting that reunification had taken place in June 2021 to bring legacy organisations together to deliver the national Target Operating Model for the Probation Service. She further highlighted the strategic outcomes for HMPPS for the next two years along with priorities to achieve HMPPS outcomes. The presentation also explained the priorities for County Durham outlining the anticipated outcomes and objectives.

Councillor Boyes added that he was pleased that all the services had been brought under one umbrella noting the difficulties experienced under the previous arrangements. In response Karen Blackburn advised that the service was a member of the Safe Durham Partnership Board and this provided a further platform to share the Probation Service's voice across relevant organisations.

Mr D Balls added that as a previous serving Magistrate he had huge respect for the Probation Service and felt that in latter years of his service, performance levels had declined and was extremely pleased to learn that reunification had taken place.

Councillor Mavin asked how many cases each Probation Officer was currently carrying. K Blackburn advised that work was still ongoing to equalise this part of the reunification, she noted that whilst caseloads were high, she was confident in the direction of travel.

Councillor Sutton-Lloyd added that in his area there was a strong community and voluntary sector and he welcomed further talks with the Probation Service in these settings.

Councillor Miller commented that speaking from his own experience as a serving Magistrate, he found the Probation Service and the teams operating within the courts to be excellent.

K Blackburn noted the work of the Sentence Liaison teams and thanked Members for their positive feedback.

Resolved: That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

9 Quarter Three, 2021/22 Performance Management Report

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources which presented an overview of progress towards achieving key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework and highlighted key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategy Team Leader noted that whilst crime remained relatively low, driven by notable reductions in theft-related offences, recorded anti-social behaviour incidents were around 5% higher than pre-COVID levels. Incidents relating to noise, littering and fly-tipping being the main reasons for the increase.

Paragraphs 2 – 4 of the report provided more detail regarding recorded crime data, ASB incidents both council and police reported. It was reported that over a 12-month period there had been 15,535 council reported incidents of ASB. This was above the three-year pre-covid average of 14,776. Despite the increase, the trend over the previous two quarters showed a decrease with 2,921 incidents being recorded during quarter three, a reduction of 24.7% on the previous quarter.

Moving on to Council Services the Strategy Team Leader provided a summary of key messages relating to; Victims of Crime, Town and Villages and Connected Communities.

Councillor Boyes made reference, to crime reporting data and how this was validated as we come out from the COVID pandemic. He also noted that all the indicators listed were trackers and not actual targets and asked for an explanation for this. Furthermore, he noted suicide rates were high across the board and he felt that this was an important area and required further scrutiny.

In response the Strategy Team Leader noted that COVID had disrupted data and at this stage it was difficult to predict whether pre-pandemic levels would occur. With regard to the tracker targets she noted this position and agreed to take comments back to the team in order to provide a more detailed response. Regarding the comments raised relating to suicide rates she agreed to seek a further response to Councillor Boyes on this topic.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that he would feed the comments into the scrutiny officer who supports the Council's Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they have had previously undertaken review activity on suicides.

Councillor Miller noted that he echoed Councillor Boyes comments regarding suicide and acknowledged that it was a significant piece of work to undertake. In referencing page 56 of the report, he noted that the figures further highlighted that there was confusion amongst the public as to who they should report ASB incidents too as both the council and police were separate points of contact.

In response the Strategy Team Leader noted that this issue had been acknowledged, noting that definition of ASB were also being defined and were awaiting sign-off, which would help to better determine for example whether incidents were related to the environment, personal or nuisance. It was hoped that by collecting data in this way a data dashboard could be created to better allow for targeted support in known hotspot areas and allow for member input.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.