

# **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 8 September 2022** at **9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor J Charlton (Chair)**

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

Councillors P Heaviside, V Andrews, D McKenna, E Mavin, J Miller, D Nicholls, D Oliver, J Quinn, A Simpson, D Sutton-Lloyd, M Wilson and C Hunt

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

Mr D Balls

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

Chief Fire Officer S Errington  
Superintendent Lee Gosling

### **Apologies:**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Atkinson, L Fenwick, C Hampson, M McGaun, C Martin, A Reed and Mrs A Paterson

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Atkinson, Councillor Louise Fenwick, Councillor Carole Hampson, Councillor Mike McGaun, Councillor Craig Martin, Councillor Anne Reed and Alison Paterson.

## **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor Cathy Hunt was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Mike McGaun.

## **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

With regards to the item Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategic, the Chair asked whether feedback could be provided to members as requested at the previous meeting. Owen Cleugh, the Head of Community Protection Services agreed to look into this and report back to members.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were received.

#### **5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

There were no items from co-opted members or interested parties.

#### **6 Horden Together Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an overview of the ongoing work of the Horden Together initiative (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Community Protection Services gave a detailed presentation which included development of the Theory of Change work as part of the Partnerships for People and Places Programme. (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor David Sutton-Lloyd noted the positive steps that were being taken by the initiative adding that communication was key and that members were aware of the project and asked if a site visit was necessary for the Committee.

Owen Cleugh Head of Community Protection Services informed the Committee that the Horden project was a flag ship and front runner and there was a need to get things right in Horden first. He noted it would not be a one size fits all approach and would move to a more area based approach in those communities that needed the support.

The Chair informed the Committee that the possibility of a site visit was being looked into, although that it may be better to organise this in smaller groups and the groups would need to contact either Joanne Waller or Owen Cleugh to organise this.

Councillor Cathy Hunt was pleased to hear residents to feed information into the system.

Owen Cleugh informed the Committee that whilst this was the case it was difficult to get residents to make reports adding that they were getting a lot of push back. The project was however actively trying to encourage engagement with regular door knocks and a more visible presence throughout the community.

Councillor Joe Quinn noted that whilst he felt the programme was an excellent idea it felt very similar to the CAT Team, where the impact on the community was good

until they left the area and the impact would fade after a few weeks. Councillor Quinn raised concerns over the long term impact of the Horden Together scheme, also asking about the possibility of similar schemes being introduced into other areas.

Owen Cleugh responded to those concerns raised by Councillor Quinn by informing the Committee that the project was looking to build a legacy in Horden that would last years and looked to educate the community on issues to create the right mind set. In response to the question about similar programmes in other communities, the Committee were informed that this would depend on resources and the geography of the area such as whether there was a location to set up a base.

Councillor David McKenna raised concerns about drugs issues across the County and asking what access to counselling had been provided and what groups the project worked with.

Owen Cleugh informed the Committee that counselling was being provided around substance misuse and links to support he commented that one of the difficulties supporting people with drug and alcohol issues was attendance at appointments. It was confirmed the project had an open door policy in terms of groups it worked with.

The Chair informed the Committee that she and the vice chair had been on a visit to the new hub and found the facilities fantastic and praised the work being done there.

## **7 Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) and Safer Streets 4 Programme Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided the Committee with background information regarding Durham City Safety of Women at Night (SWaN) (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Community Protection Services gave a detailed presentation regarding the outcome of the fourth round of Safer Streets Funding Programme (for copy see file of Minutes).

With regards to reported incidents, Councillor Joe Quinn noted that the 'other' category had a high number of incidents at 222 and asked for clarification on the types of incidents. He also commented on whether it was known that all were welcome to the hub if they were in need.

In response to questions from Councillor Quinn, Owen Cleugh informed the Committee these were reported incidents such as a loss of a phone or someone feeling distressed. He added that a more accurate breakdown of these incidents could not be provided. In relation to awareness of the hub being open to all the

Committee was informed that whilst the funding bid had been concerned with the safety of women, the staff were there to assist everyone.

Councillor David Sutton-Lloyd commented that he hadn't appreciated just how vulnerable women felt on a night out, noting communication about the programme was key and praised the work being done.

Councillor Jake Miller noted the great work being done by the team and referred to a recent presentation at Police HQ, where he had been informed of challenges the Police had found in engaging with the University and asked had this programme experienced similar issues.

Owen Cleugh informed the Committee that Durham University had contributed toward The Hub in the City centre and advised that they had not experienced any issues with the information they had requested.

Superintendent Lee Gosling addressed the Committee noting he too was at the same presentation and confirmed that the difficulties in working with the University depended on the information being requested.

Councillor Dan Nicholls praised the work of the team, noting that the Durham economy does rely very heavily on the night life so the City needs to feel safe and questioned what the long term plans were for the programme.

In response to questions raised by Councillor Nicholls, Owen Cleugh noted that whilst everyone has been very generous the scheme did need to be more sustainable and that discussions around funding the programme had to begin to secure long term funding.

The Chair then informed the Committee that she had seen the work done by the team adding she had felt very safe when in Durham City and noted a very visible presence throughout the City.

## **8 Open Water Safety Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided the Committee with an update on Open Water Safety (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Occupational Health and Safety Manager gave a detailed presentation regarding Open Water Safety (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Dan Nicholls addressed the Committee noting it was great to see there were no fatalities over the summer but questioned the sporadic nature of the messaging on suicide prevention. He suggested that a system be put in place for stickers with the Samaritans number on in designated areas that could be reported when damaged and replaced.

Kevin Lough Occupational Health and Safety Manager informed the Committee that posters and literature was placed at known hot spots such as Durham and Chester-le-Street noting that proactive work was being carried out by Public Health.

Councillor Jake Miller asked if there were any commonalities with these hot spots and followed up by asking what more could be done in these areas.

Kevin Lough informed the Committee that there were no particular trends throughout the County noting that the City centre used to be the main hot spot for these incidents but they were now sporadic and scattered throughout the County.

Councillor David Sutton-Lloyd noted the fantastic work being carried out adding that perhaps members should look at their own wards as he could think of a few areas in his own that may not have preventative signs or notices up.

Councillor Joe Quinn was pleased to see the County was below the national average in terms of fatalities in open water. He did have concerns about rescue equipment placed in metal cabinets with a request to call 999 for assistance to open noting that if there was an incident people do not always think rationally and often panic. He asked if the best course of action was to have the safety equipment locked in a metal cabinet.

Kevin Lough responded to these concerns by informing the Committee that this was the national approach before adding that due to anti-social behaviour, equipment was becoming damaged and needing to be replaced. He confirmed 16 pieces of equipment had previously been replaced at that location. The choice was between having it in a locked cabinet or not at all.

David Balls sought clarity on what was considered a near miss. He noted that since the group had started it had been several years since a fatality and this was to be commended. He added that across the County there had been few changes to the statistics and asked if there was anything to be learned from this.

In response Kevin Lough confirmed a near miss was any incident that had occurred with no harm, adding that the City centre was unique in that most incidents were linked with the night time economy. He informed the Committee that the main drivers for a drop in fatalities were education and awareness noting the work done in the City Centre was very specific to that area and would be difficult to apply County wide.

The Chief Fire Officer Stuart Errington addressed the Committee firstly congratulating Kevin Lough for overseeing the work and for the successful partnership, noting the positive numbers throughout the County when compared to the national average. He informed Members that the current risk was being looked at station by station and they had recently upscaled staff specifically for this area of work. The Chief Fire Officer also reassured Members that this was an area of work

that required an operational response adding that they would always look to prevention first.

The Chair informed the Committee that County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service Facebook page often had training videos uploaded, the most recent being on water training which could be shared to create more awareness.

Councillor Cathy Hunt asked for some clarity regarding the education of the project and enquired whether schools were being visited to spread awareness, asking if the Governing bodies of these schools had been approached.

Kevin Lough informed the Committee that the Dying to be Cool initiative was offered to every school but that not all schools had taken this up, adding that those schools who had not were now being contacted and encouraged to do so. He advised members that so far 1500 students had attended some form of assembly on the topic and that a video on Dying to be Cool had been sent to some schools who did not want an assembly. With regards to how these schools were being approached it was noted that everything had been considered.

The Chair advised the Committee that as members they could perhaps approach schools in their divisions and encourage them to take up the offer of the course.

Councillor David McKenna asked what qualifications were needed to deliver the course and if youth groups were being approached to broaden the audience noting that it could be tailored to specific areas and their dangers.

Kevin Lough informed the Committee that the course had been delivered at New College, Durham Sixth Form Centre and other establishments and were actively looking to deliver the course to more places.

## **9 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategic Group Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided the Committee with an update on the ongoing work of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategic Group (for copy see file of Minutes).

In terms of mediation, David Balls commented that it was important for people to talk something through rather than have something imposed on them.

The Chair reminded the Committee that a special SSC OSC had been organised for Tuesday 11 October 2022 which would be a single item agenda to enable the Committee to consider and comment on the Safe Durham Partnership draft Anti Social Behaviour Strategy. Stephen Gwilym, Principal Overview & Scrutiny Officer reminded the Committee that this would be a public meeting held in person.