

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 **Tuesday 16 September 2014** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, J Charlton, P Conway, J Gray, C Hampson, M Hodgson, G Holland, J Maitland, N Martin, J Measor, K Shaw, P Stradling, J Turnbull and C Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr A J Cooke and Mr J Welch

Co-opted Employees/Officers:

S Errington and Chief Superintendent G Hall

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor T Nearney (Vice Chairman) and Councillors P Conway and S Forster.

2 Substitute Members

There were no Substitute Members in attendance.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held 20 June 2014

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any

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 presented a slide which referenced the following media coverage in relation to the remit of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

- 'Funding boost for countywide safety project', The Northern Echo, 12 September 2014 – £500k had been awarded to the Safe Durham Partnership to continue their Safer Homes project, which was jointly run by County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, Durham County Council and Durham Police.
- 'Motorist shows age is no limit to safe driving', The Northern Echo, 3 September 2014 - Durham County Council's Safer Driving with Age (SAGE) driving assessment. The assessment programme aimed to help older motorists maintain and improve their driving so that they could continue driving for as long as it was safe to do so.
- 'Thousands of North-East pet owners fined for dog fouling', The Durham Times, 8 September 2014 – Durham County Council had issued the most Fixed Penalty Notices of all North East Councils for dog fouling.
- 'Six arrested in early morning drugs raid' ITV Tyne Tees, website 27 August 2014 - Operation Bream' had taken place 6am on Wednesday 27th August, with raids on two addresses in Witton Gilbert, one in Langley Park and one in Stanley. Those arrested had been detained on suspicion of conspiracy to supply class A drugs.

7 National Probation Service

The Committee received a presentation from C Carey, Head of Durham National Probation Service (NPS), which provided details of the newly established NPS following the abolishment of the County Durham and Tees Valley Probation Trust (for copy see file of minutes).

Chief Superintendent Hall referred to the emphasis on the rehabilitation of offenders and queried whether victims of crime would continue to be given an appropriate level of support. The Head of Durham NPS confirmed that restorative justice was one of their priorities and they were currently working on ensuring that victim impact statements were submitted to the courts. Often they were omitted and were sometimes imperative in the determination of criminal proceedings. Additionally, NPS would be involved in a pre-sentence restorative justice pilot at Durham Crown Court.

In response to a query from Mr Cooke, the Head of Durham NPS confirmed that they were unable to identify performance issues following the establishment of the new service, in the absence of performance data. Targets of the former County Durham and Tees Valley Probation Trust would be used, however it would be a while before the NPS would have their own detailed comparable data. Councillor Hodgson was concerned and suggested that Members received regular briefings ahead of the performance data analysis.

In response to a query from Councillor Armstrong the Head of Durham NPS confirmed that the most significant performance indicators were outcomes, and performance indicators included; measures around public protection and reductions in the number of offenders completing their probation without reoffending.

The Head of Head of Planning & Service Strategy referred to the impact of the transition and complimented Durham NPS on their commitment and continuity throughout.

In response to the Chairman, the Head of Durham NPS agreed that regular updates could be sent if required.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That a progress report on the activity of the National Probation Service be included at a future meeting of the Committee.
- (iii) That leaflets and further information be circulation electronically to all Members of the Committee.

8 County Durham Road Casualty Reduction Forum

The Committee received a presentation from the Strategic Traffic Manager, which provided details regarding the number and types of road casualties in 2013 and the work undertaken by the County Durham Road Casualty Reduction Forum in an attempt to reduce them and develop a safer road environment (for copy see file of minutes).

In response to a query from Councillor Armstrong, the Strategic Traffic Manager advised that a SAGE (Safer Driving with Age) programme was aimed at drivers aged 55 and over and was available to drivers at a cost of £25. The programme included a 40 minute assessment which was primarily to build driver confidence, with feedback and advice being offered to drivers throughout the course.

In response to a query from Mr Cooke with regard to the high number of motorcyclists killed or seriously injured, the Strategic Traffic Manager confirmed that they tended to be from County Durham, rather than be travelling from areas outside of the County. Police engaged with motorcyclists at events such as BikeWise and advised them that they had a responsibility for their own safety. He confirmed that collisions were much more likely to result in a serious injury, due to the nature of the vehicle.

Councillor Hodgson suggested that a briefing note was sent to all Members regarding the Junior Road Safety Officer Scheme as many were also school governors and may be interested in the scheme for their own schools. Chief Superintendent Hall added that education was now aimed at primary school pupils, referring to a Road Safety Carousel aimed at children in years 5 and 6 and provided free of charge by the council.

In response to Councillor Hodgson's disappointment at the lack of national road safety campaigns funded by the government, the Strategic Traffic Manager confirmed that they had dwindled in recent years due to budget restraints. He referred to the positive outcome of the seatbelt campaign and hoped that there would be more forthcoming in the future. In response to a comment from the Chairman regarding the high number of young drivers involved in collisions, the Strategic Traffic Manager confirmed that statistically 17-25 year olds were more likely to be involved in a collision with contributing factors such as having their friends in the car or on dark evenings and confirmed that education young people before they were able to get a licence was the approach taken.

The Director of Community Protection, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) referred to the impact on the FRS when dealing with Road Traffic Accidents and suggested that despite educational messages, the figures had not substantially changed in the past few years and suggested taking a different approach. The Strategic Traffic Manager agreed that the message had been repetitive for a number of years, however there were no alternative methods that could be used with the resources available.

In response to a query from Chief Superintendent Hall the Road Safety Section Manager confirmed that national data analysis was collated following the completion of an investigation and used to target a specific group of individuals. He reiterated that the primary aim of the service was to change attitude towards road safety and going into secondary schools and promoting road safety from an early age was an approach that ensured children were educated before they got behind the wheel of a car.

Mr Welch referred to the increased number of mobility scooters being used and queried whether there were plans to offer drivers training courses. The Strategic Traffic Manager confirmed that this was an area which had not yet been explored, although it was something that could be considered in the future.

Councillor Wilson queried whether hands free mobile kits were safe to use in cars and the Strategic Traffic Manager replied that although it was not illegal to use such kits, the use of any such equipment in a car, must cause a certain degree of distraction to the driver and was therefore not advisable.

In response to Councillor Martin, the Strategic Traffic Manager confirmed that the percentages were representative of small numbers and there had been an overall reduction nationally, in road casualties. This was partially down to the design of newer vehicles and the installation of safety features such as airbags and seatbelts. Cyclists were obviously more likely to have more serious accidents due to the nature of the vehicle they were travelling on and the lack of safety features, however he assured the Committee that road improvements were constantly being explored and following an incident, full consideration would be given to whether any safety mechanisms could be installed to prevent similar incidents in future.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That a response containing comments from the Committee be sent to the Road Safety Reduction Partnership.
- (iii) That dates of the WiseDrive and Safety Carousel events and briefing notes be circulated to Members of the Committee.
- (iv) That an update report to a future meeting of the Committee be included within the Work Programme for the Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

9 Overview and Scrutiny Review, Neighbourhood Wardens - Progress Update on Recommendations

The Committee received an update from the Neighbourhood Protection Manager regarding the Committee's previous review of Neighbourhood Wardens (for copy see file of minutes).

Several Councillors noted the excellent work of the Neighbourhood Wardens in responding to service requests and reassuring residents, with Councillor Measor adding that Wardens in the Easington area had given up their own time to participate in a charity event. In response to a question from Councillor Wilson the Neighbourhood Protection Manager confirmed that there had been staff reductions, therefore wardens had to be task focused. This meant that it was not always possible for them to visit specific areas where there were no issues to investigate, however if invited, Wardens did attend PACT meetings. The Chairman confirmed that Councillors could contact a Neighbourhood Warden Team Leader to discuss their attendance at any meetings. Chief Superintendent Hall confirmed that from 30 October 2014, the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill would increase powers to Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police would be providing training packages which partners would be able to access.

Councillor Stradling noted that Wardens existing powers meant they were unable to deal with certain types of service requests, such as parking or refuse and added that having then to contact another department regarding those issues could be seen as a weakness in the service. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager confirmed that new legislation would broaden the powers of the Wardens providing reassurance to Residents, the issue of wider responsibility was being investigated.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Quarter 1 2014/15 Performance Management Report

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which presented progress against the corporate basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Safer theme and other significant performance issues for the first quarter of 2014/15 covering the period April to June 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Measor queried whether the number of theft offences was linked to recent media reports regarding food poverty and contributing to the figures. Chief Superintendent Hall confirmed that meat and toiletries were often targeted by drug users due to their value and police were offering advice to retailers on how they could display their products to reduce theft. In addition, women offenders could attend a court diversion scheme, available for those who had admitted to shoplifting due to difficulty at home as a result of welfare reform. A high number of incidents were linked to alcohol and drug users or people with mental health issues. Councillor Charlton referred to the success of Shop Watch in Stanley and Chief Superintendent Hall confirmed that not all retailers were interested in signing up to the scheme, however it was an effective way of preventing crime.

In response to a question from Councillor Wilson, Chief Superintendent Hall confirmed that safeguarding children was always considered a primary concern and incidents regarding children would continue to be dealt with immediately.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

11 Overview and Scrutiny Review of Substance Misuse Services

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer informed Members of a Review Group meeting in July 2014 with the Commissioning Manager, Children's Services and Public Health, where the new Service Model for Substance Misuse had been discussed. A procurement process for a new service provider was being undertaken and the Review Group would next meet following the outcome of the procurement process.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 Overview and Scrutiny Review of Organised Crime

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer provided Members with an update with regards to the main Review of Organised Crime. He informed Members that a multi-agency event in Newton Aycliffe in July, the Home Office had indicated their interest in the Review and a scope is currently being developed.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

13 Police and Crime Panel

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided Members with progress of the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) for the Durham Constabulary Force area (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that a Task and Finish Group had been identified to look at the PCP Work Programme and is scheduled to present its findings in October 2014.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

14 Safe Durham Partnership Update

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Planning and Service Strategy which provided Members with a summary update on the key issues discussed at the July 2014 Safe Durham Partnership Board.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.