

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 23 March 2016** at **9.15 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, C Hampson, M Hodgson, G Holland, H Liddle, J Maitland, N Martin, J Measor, T Nearney, K Shaw, P Stradling, F Tinsley, J Turnbull and C Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr J Welch

Co-opted Employees/Officers:

Chief Superintendent H McMillan

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Charlton, S Forster, J Gray, S Iveson, Mr A J Cooke and Chief Fire Officer S Errington.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held 15 February 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee noted that in relation to Item 9 within the minutes, a response from the Committee in relation to the refresh of the Safe Durham Plan had been submitted.

The Chairman noted that the Committee's Co-opted Member from the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS), Stuart Errington had now been appointed as Chief Fire Officer, the Committee congratulated the Chief Fire Officer on his appointment.

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.

The Chairman noted that, in order to best accommodate presenting Officers, it was preferable to take the City Safety Group update report as the next item. Members of the Committee agreed.

6 The City Safety Group

The Chairman introduced the Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services, Oliver Sherratt to give an update presentation to Members in respect of the work of the City Safety Group (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services noted that a large amount of work had been undertaken since the last update provided by Terry Collins, the previous Corporate Director, now Chief Executive, at the meeting of the Committee in September 2015. Members were reminded that the City Safety Group (CSG) had been established in February 2015 following the tragic death of three students in the river within a 14 month period and included representatives from Durham County Council (DCC), Durham Constabulary, the CDDFRS, Durham University, and Durham Students' Union. It was noted that there had been a shared commitment and urgency from all partners to work together to further improve safety in the City Centre, with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) having been commissioned to undertake an independent review of riverside safety, taking into account all aspects of river safety. It was added that RoSPA had commended the work of the CSG and a number of physical and practical options were put forward. Members were reminded that a delivery plan had been developed to implement recommendations.

The Committee noted that many activities had been undertaken, such as: Riverside Assessment; Student Volunteer Group; Guardianship Arrangements; Durham Street Lights support; Education and Awareness; Taxi Arrangements; Alcohol Retail Training; Night Bus; RoSPA; communications/briefings; Safe Haven; and pilot breathalysers.

Councillors learned that there had been a number of infrastructure works carried out along the river to improve safety, amounting to £230,000 funded by DCC, Durham University and Durham Cathedral. It was noted DCC was commissioned to undertake the works and the works were completed on time and a robust inspection and maintenance regime was put in place in addition. Members were reminded that the Lumiere event had taken place with over 200,000 visitors to the City Centre and with no river related incidents. With reference to the riverside footpaths, Members noted before and after photographs detailing the improvements made, the materials chosen to be in sympathy with the surroundings, and the process of inspection and maintenance, given that the location would be prone to erosion.

In terms of the fencing, there were a number of types as appropriate to the location, carefully chosen and in context of the area's heritage and conservation status. It was

added that the communication of the works was sensitively managed and installation had been completed with no negative impact upon the Council or its partners. Members noted that similarly to the footpaths, there was an inspection and monitoring regime in place. The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services explained the installation of public rescue equipment (PRE) and that all existing PRE had been upgraded and additional units installed at key risk locations. Members learned of the information on each unit identifying the location and instructions, and it was added the PRE would also be subject to a robust inspection and monitoring regime.

Councillors learned that in response to a recommendation in terms of a lighting policy, the CSG agreed to divert footpath users towards lit routes. It was explained that additional lighting was installed at "Windy Gap", and again, inspection and monitoring was put in place. Members noted works to improve signage, including reinforcing where lit routes were and the production of a poster that highlighted the lit night time walking routes around the city centre, which were publicised via the University and within licensed premises, albeit the routes were not just for students' use.

The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services noted that as part of the inspections and works the five weir structures in Durham City had been assessed independently by the Council. It was noted that 3 had required no further works, with the mill House weir having been previously identified as high risk and therefore improvement works were carried out, reducing the risk such that no further works were required. It was added that the weir beneath Millburngate Bridge would have fencing installed following the departure of contractors currently on the site.

The Committee were reminded that in addition to physical works, there was a number of education and awareness raising events, with the delivery of a social norms campaign and focus on promotion of positive behaviour, led by Durham Students' Union. It was added that this was important and it was equally as important to refresh the message in order to keep each new cohort of students advised as to the risks.

The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services informed Members that a RoSPA re-assessment was being undertaken and that all the high risk areas had now gone. It was added that a significant amount of effort had provided a much improved environment and that once the report had been finalised then it could be shared with Members for their information. It was reiterated that the work had been recognised as national best practice and the Chief Executive had been lead speaker at the RoSPA National Water Safety Conference held in Durham. Members learned that in addition the work had been used as a case study in the new national drowning prevention strategy, launched by Government in February 2016.

Members noted that in moving forward it had been explained that the CDR continued to meet quarterly and that if there was any significant incident, a meeting of the CSR would be held immediately in response and review what had happened and to consider if any further action was required. It was noted that physical risk control measures would be reviewed and revisited and that the education and awareness campaigns would be maintained, together with looking to identify new opportunities to provide education on the issues of safety. It was added this included activities such as writing to premises within Durham City to ask them as regards carry out their own risk assessments, with the feedback so far being positive.

The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services noted that in summary: a lot of good work had been carried out; there was continued support and commitment from all partners; Durham was a safe city and all involved wanted it to remain that way; there had been no reported accidents/incidents/fatalities following the introduction of the CSG recommendations; and that all involved would not be complacent and work hard to maintain the momentum gathered.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services and asked Members for their questions on the update report and presentation.

Councillor J Maitland asked as regards the fencing, whether it was replaced like-for-like or upgraded to the latest safer options. The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services noted that fencing was as appropriate to each location, and that while no fencing could provide such a barrier to prevent access to the water, it was noted that the best options were taken forward, matched appropriately to the location.

Councillor F Tinsley noted that the CSG had rightly focussed on river safety following the recent tragedies, however, now that a lot of these issues had been addressed were there other areas the CSR would look at. The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services agreed that the main focus had been the safety around the river, but the wider safety within the night-time economy and issues involving alcohol had been looked at as preventative actions and this work had been very positive. It was added that other aspects had been looked at, however, in response to the incidents the focus had been the issues of river safety for the initial period.

Councillor C Wilson asked options in terms of vandalism to the fencing and equipment, for example to fine those responsible, and how issues for maintenance could be reported. The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services any reports could be directed to the Council for following up, and that issues of anti-social behaviour would be looked at and that the Council would look to learn from the RoSPA Risk Assessments and apply to other areas and number of DCC staff had received training. Members noted that there were over 200 location identified and information on any safety issues would be greatly received. The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services added that feedback from the Coroner had included reference to signage to reiterated that water can be dangerous and to stay safe.

Councillor T Nearney noted the physical improvements had been great and asked whether there would be support for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in supporting those affected by the night-time economy and also whether the CDR were working with Planning and Licensing in terms of designing out and issues with new developments, such as plans for Millburngate. Councillor N Martin noted feedback as regards the works had been positive and highlighted the issue of the area at "Browns Boatyard", used often by families with young children as a social area. Councillor P Stradling asked whether the works had been carried out within budget. The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services explained that the VCS was as a part of wider plans and the CSG had agreed this week to look at a given year to identify the risks, such as at busy events such as the Miners' Gala, the Regatta and so on, and therefore to then see when to best target the resources we do have and how the VCS could play into that. In terms of the works on the river, it was noted there was still work to do, and that the situation would be kept under review.

The Council's Occupational Health and Safety Manager, Kevin Lough added that it was important to note that in some cases the fencing that would be considered as a barrier to

prevent people falling into the river was also a means by which they would be able to pull themselves out and therefore there was a need to have a balance and to have works carried out in the appropriate place using the appropriate fencing. It was added that the budget was policy led and that it was based upon what works were deemed as being required to maintain safety.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

7 Media Relations

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the recent prominent articles and news stories relating to the remit of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes). The articles included: the first UK Anti-Drowning Strategy, with Durham being praised for its work; an article and CCTV footage in respect of two men dumping an air-conditioning unit in countryside at Horden, part of the ongoing "Operation: 'Stop it'" campaign which has seen around 20-30 prosecutions in this regard; and the launch by Durham Constabulary of a new website in terms local updates helping with community engagement, keeping local people informed and boosting confidence levels in our communities.

The Chairman noted it would be useful for the committee to have a report back on the use of covert CCTV at a future meeting.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

8 Quarter 3 2015/16 Performance Management Report

The Chairman introduced the Strategic Manager - Performance and Information Management, Keith Forster who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter 3 2015/16 Performance Management Report for the Altogether Safer theme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager - Performance and Information Management referred Members to the report and noted key performance achievements, including: increased performance in relation to Care Connect call responses; the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System; and a reduction in anti-social behaviour (ASB) figures.

It was noted that the key performance issues included a further underperformance in respect of the number of people completing alcohol and drug treatment, noting the new provider, Lifeline, was still in the process of "bedding in", however, the comments from Members made at the last Committee had been fed back to the Director of Public Health. In respect of reoffending, it was noted that Durham's re-offending rate was 29% which was higher than the national average (26.5%) and that as there was a 2 year data lag in this respect, there was a work ongoing in order to produce a local measure.

It was encouraging to note that 86% of individuals who engaged though the Checkpoint programme had successfully completed. In relation to Youth reoffending, although the

percentage of the offending cohort who re-offend had increased to 44.4%, there had been a substantial reduction in the number of young offenders between 2007 and 2015.

Members noted that number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents had increased from the last quarter and were higher than the previous year, with the 170 incidents including 21 being children and one being a fatality. The Committee learned that the suicide rate for County Durham remained higher than the North East and England rates, and that the Public Mental Health Strategy was refreshed in February 2016 and included the development of a Suicide Prevention Framework and Action Plan for County Durham based upon local data.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Manager - Performance and Information Management and asked Members for their questions.

Councillor H Liddle asked as regards the impact of the Youth Services review, with the Head of Planning and Service Strategy, Children and Adults Services, Peter Appleton explaining the review was targeted and that services were working together.

The Chairman noted that he was disappointed in the performance reported in terms of the drug and alcohol treatment and therefore a Special Meeting on the issue would be appropriate. The Chairman asked whether, while the performance in terms of the number of first time entrants to the criminal justice system was good, the alternatives in terms of restorative justice and were robust and fitting to the crimes being committed. Councillor J Armstrong agreed as regards a Special Meeting, with the Overview and Scrutiny Officer adding that a Joint Meeting with the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee may be appropriate.

Councillor J Maitland noted the issues highlighted in terms of suicides, with the Head of Planning and Service Strategy agreeing that the issue was very sad. The Head of Planning and Service Strategy added that while there was data lag in terms of the statistics, a lot work was being undertaken such as the Crisis Care Concordat and it was an issue being looked at again by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Chairman added that it would be useful if the matter would be reported back at this Committee in addition.

Councillor N Martin noted that at paragraph 5 (iv) of the report the figure of 5,009 violent crimes reported represented an increase of around a quarter and asked whether changes in recording could account for this. The Strategic Manager - Performance and Information Management noted that a recent redefinition had meant that a larger number of incidents would be recorded as violent crimes, with nationally an average increase of around 30% having been noted. Chief Superintendent H McMillan added that while there may have been a small actual increase and then a larger increase as a result of the changes in recording, the figures gave a more accurate picture. It was explained that in the past there was a period of 72 hours in which to gather information and to assess via established standards as to how an incident would be categorised. Members learned that the Home Office now said for recording to be within 24 hours and Police Forces had to comply with this standard. It was added that by the old rules there was no recording of the incident having involved violence until those involved had been spoken to directly, however, now the incident could be recorded prior to this and that there were a number of factors/criteria now that meant it was more difficult to "no crime" an incident.

Chief Superintendent H McMillan noted that there was a lot more reports via schools and a lot more "low-level" incidents would now be recorded as being violent.

Councillor G Holland noted that Members had previously raised the issue of where the statistics and performance had altered by a significant amount and how what was significant would be determined and reported to Members to help show what issues should be focussed upon. Councillor N Martin noted he had spoken to Officers as regards the issue and work was ongoing in this regard. Councillor J Armstrong noted that the narrative alongside the statistics was being improved to give more explanation for Members.

Councillor C Wilson noted that some training in terms of suicide prevention had been given via an AAP and this may be of some interest and use to Members of the Committee.

Councillor H Liddle asked whether those handling the calls received were determining whether an incident was a crime, and were those staff were non-Police personnel. Chief Superintendent H McMillan noted that the call handlers were predominantly Police staff and were highly trained and skilled in order to deal with the types of calls received by the Police, with performance being very good in this regard.

Councillor K Shaw asked whether indicator RED PI 44 referred to those in vehicles or included pedestrians in addition. The Strategic Manager - Performance and Information Management noted that the figures represented all those killed or seriously injured in a road accident and therefore both in vehicles and any pedestrians that may have become involved.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 Draft Council Plan 2016-2019 - Refresh of the Work Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the report of the Assistant Chief Executive in terms of the Draft Council Plan 2016-2019 and the Refresh of the Work Programme for the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes). The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that Appendix 2 to the report contained the draft Altogether Safer Priority Theme, to be considered by Council in April 2016.

Members noted that the report set out what areas had been looked at by the Committee, what areas were in the work programme going forward, linked to the Safe Durham Partnership Plan and the Council Plan and its supporting plans and policies. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that this now included counter terrorist and the prevention of violent extremism.

The Committee were asked to note the gaps within the current work programme, namely: Work with partners to improve support services for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence and identify areas for improvements within the criminal justice system; counter terrorism and the Prevent duty; evaluate the effectiveness of multi-agency intervention

service (MAIS); community and organisational resilience for emergency preparedness response and recovery; reduce the impact of hate crime; improved safety in the home; and cybercrime. Members noted a range of cross-cutting themes and the arrangements in place linked to the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Chairman thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, noting the excellent work of the Committee and its Working Groups, including the Alcohol and the Demand on the Emergency Services Working Group, chaired by Councillor T Nearney, and asked Members for any questions.

Councillor J Armstrong noted the new measure in terms of improved safety in the home, the work with the CDDFRS and asked for an overview of what was being done. Councillor M Hodgson added that the home safety checks being carried out by CDDFRS were aided by a grant from Government, via DCC expanding the scope of the scheme.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Overview and Scrutiny Review Updates

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that three of the meetings of the Alcohol and the Demand on the Emergency Services Working Group had taken place, chaired by Councillor T Nearney, with a lot of positive information coming forward. Councillor T Nearney informed Members of the Committee that the Group had received presentations from the Chief Executive of BALANCE and from Sergeant M Urwin and the Council's Consumer Protection Manager, Owen Cleugh. Members were reminded of a field study opportunity on 2 April and to contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer if interested. It was added that the next meeting of the Working Group on 5 April would have representatives from Urgent Care and the North East Ambulance Service to give evidence in terms of the impact of alcohol on their services. Councillor J Armstrong noted that the issue of minimum unit pricing (MUP) had been raised at all of the meetings of Working Group so far.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that the next meeting of the 20mph Working Group would be in April and Members of the Working Group would receive a draft report for comments prior to being submitted to Cabinet in May. Members noted that the work undertaken in terms of the 20mph Working Group had been shortlisted for the Management Journal (MJ) Awards, for "Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny".

Councillor P Stradling noted he hoped that the Authority was able to secure the award for the hard work that had been undertaken, and should the Authority win or otherwise, it offered a further opportunity to promote the 20mph limits being introduced within areas of the county, together with the positive impact in terms of keeping people safe in the areas around our schools.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

11 Police and Crime Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the report setting out the main issues discussed at the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted the main issues included:

- Revenue and Capital Budgets 2016/17, Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20, Revenue and Capital Budgets 2015/16.
- Community Safety Funding 2016/17.
- Quarter 3 Performance Report 2015/16.
- Recent HMIC Inspection Reports.
- New Policing and Crime Bill.

Members noted that Durham Constabulary had recently been inspected and that across all areas the force was rated as good or outstanding, and was the only force in the country being rated as outstanding in investigating crime and managing offenders. The Chairman asked that the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner be congratulated in respect of all the hard work undertaken by Durham Constabulary to achieve these excellent high standards.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 Consumer Protection and Advertising

The Chairman noted that Councillor C Hampson had asked to raise an issue with Members of the Committee.

Councillor C Hampson thanked the Chairman and noted she had seen an increase in her area of shops and market stalls selling paraphernalia associated with cannabis use and felt that these items being in such open display was not appropriate. Councillor C Hampson added she had spoken to the local Police Inspector in respect of this matter. Councillor C Hampson added that another issue to be highlighted with Members was that of signage in shops referring to promotions on “booze” when referring to alcohol and asked if this wording was subject to any input from Licensing or Trading Standards. Councillor J Measor noted similar items for sale in shops located within her area.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted he would pass the comments on to the Council’s Consumer Protection Manager and Councillor J Armstrong added it may be useful to pass on the Police and Crime commissioner in addition. The Chairman concluded by noting that there was also the issue of some shops selling so called “legal highs”, and the links to anti-social behaviour and the health risks posed to the public by those psychoactive substances.