

## **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 31 October 2017** at **9.30 am**

#### **Present:**

**Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)**

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

Councillors B Avery, A Bainbridge, J Charlton, J Considine, R Crute, C Hampson, S Iveson, L Kennedy, H Liddle, J Maitland, J Nicholson, A Patterson, J Stephenson, D Stoker, K Thompson and J Turnbull

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

Mr A J Cooke and Mr J Welch

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

Chief Fire Officer S Errington

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Durham, E Mavin, C Wilson and Chief Superintendent A Green.

### **2 Substitute Members**

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

### **3 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held 22 September 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee noted information in terms of a press release relating to a road safety campaign had been circulated. It was added that the Strategic Manager, County Durham Youth Offending Service would be in attendance at the February meeting to give a further update and that additional information in relation to the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 had also been circulated.

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

Councillors B Avery, D Stoker and J Turnbull declared an interest in Item 9, Progress of recommendations following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Home Safety - Safe and Wellbeing Visits as Members of the County Durham and Darlington Fire Authority.

#### **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 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 a cybercrime related article – “Do you know who’s hacking into your details? The scourge of cybercrime is trapping thousands”, and noted this tied in with the work of the Working Group. It was added that 2 to 8 October was Home Fire Safety Week 2017, linking to the item on Safe and Wellbeing Visits and the Safe Durham Partnership. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted a third article, from the Council’s website, referred to a project to tackle violence against women and girls which had received £310,000, looking to work with perpetrators to prevent reoffending.

#### **Resolved:**

That the presentation be noted.

#### **7 Progress of recommendations following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Organised Crime**

The Chairman introduced DCI Dave Aston from Durham Constabulary to give a presentation to update Members on progress following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Organised Crime (for copy see file of minutes).

DCI Dave Aston reminded Members of the development of Local Profiles with partners to get the best picture in terms of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs). Members noted that the Home Office definition was: “Serious crime that is: planned; coordinated; conducted by people working together on a continuing basis”. It was added that while in the majority of cases the motivation is financial, it was not always, for example cybercrime or sexual exploitation.

The Committee noted that the reason to tackle OCGs was to reduce the harm, and with diminishing resources it was important to tackle those offenders causing the most harm, with OCGs “industrialising” crime. It was explained that it was important to be able to tackle the misery caused: drug dealing and the burden on the Health Service; fraud and the psychological harm caused to victims; child sexual exploitation (CSE). DCI Dave Aston added that it was also important to intervene early, working with partners, to lessen the financial impact.

DCI Dave Aston referred Members to a diagram setting out the Local Profile Map, adding that there were now 34 rather than 30 OCGs, with the majority linked to drugs and violence, and with around half involved in money laundering. It was added that there had been some concern around a year ago that there was no map in terms of modern slavery or CSE, it was noted that was now mapped and referred to regional colleagues. DCI Dave Aston noted that Officers were not complacent and worked hard to uncover the hidden aspects of OCGs.

Members noted that there had been 12 drug related deaths last year. DCI Dave Aston noted an emerging trend of mixing the usual drugs with the opioid painkiller fentanyl, adding that while no deaths had been attributed to this in our area, this was an issue Officers were alert to. The Committee noted that the supply of cocaine and heroin continued to be the main sources of revenue for those OCGs dealing in illegal drugs, with the cultivation and sale of cannabis also being undertaken. It was added that there was a strong correlation between illegal drug sales and violence, in terms of intimidation within the market. It was noted while there were some pockets of crack cocaine use within the force area, these were isolated and the issue was not a large one at the moment, though it was an area Officers were keeping an eye on.

*Councillor J Charlton entered the meeting at 9.44am*

In terms of modern slavery and human trafficking, DCI Dave Aston explained that the main area was in terms of labour exploitation with sexual exploitation being also an issue, the latter being very much internet based with locations moving week on week. It was acknowledged that there were gaps in knowledge and that work was needed to understand the scale of the issue. DCI Dave Aston noted that often people were at risk due to the working and living conditions, and there were barriers in terms of reporting.

The Committee noted that in terms of CSE and abuse, 63% of sexual offences were against children and victims could become perpetrators/facilitators. DCI Dave Aston added that with the advancement of digital technology 83% was online, and that in order to tackle these issues, cooperation with schools, families and communities was important.

Members were reminded of the types of environmental crimes that OCGs carried out, including a new trend for illegally dumped baled waste, made to look like hay bales and then illegally dumped in rural areas. This can result in significant clear up costs for the Local Authority, Environment Agency and landowners. DCI Dave Aston noted there had been 8 incidents last year, and that working with partners from the Fire Service, Local Authority, Environment Agency and colleagues from Cleveland Police the issues had been tackled, and since March 2017 there had been no further incidents.

It was explained in terms of violence, the area had a high proportion when compared to others, with 21 violent groups. It was noted that some were linked to Traveller communities and also to the use of weapons. DCI Dave Aston noted that the reluctance to report violence was an issue and in terms of weapons there were very few firearms discharges per year in our area. It was noted that however there was still a need to respond effectively and a number of levers, including citing safeguarding issues, were used to ensure there was a fear to possess or use firearms.

DCI Dave Aston referred Members to "County Lines", urban based OCGs that would look to supply smaller towns or rural areas with illegal drugs. It was explained that it often involved the use of children or vulnerable people to supply local dealers.

Members learned that a “hot-line” would be set up to allow the controllers to set up transactions without having to have any “hands on” involvement. Councillors noted that it could also involve debt bondage and issues of CSE. It was noted this had not yet been seen within the County, however it was important to raise awareness.

DCI Dave Aston explained to the Committee the very effective Partnership Disruption and Intervention Panel, working with various partners who were all keen to disrupt OCGs as much as possible. Members noted coordinate strikes on sites, with several agencies working together. He added that a lot of other Police Forces visited the County to see how we operated, however, there was no complacency and all partners worked hard together to tackle OCGs.

The Chairman thanked DCI Dave Aston and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Mr AJ Cooke noted that the increases in the cost of living may lead to some people being drawn in and having their lives ruined. DCI Dave Aston noted that the Police were aware of the hierarchies that existed, with some at the bottom being victimised. He reminded Members of the Checkpoint programme, and how this could look at the critical path that led an individual to offend. The Committee noted that if a root cause can be identified then offenders could work with Checkpoint Navigators and if they were able to complete their programme, then they would not be prosecuted. It was explained that should the programme was not adhered to then the offender would proceed to court and prosecution. DCI Dave Aston noted that there were also a number of other programmes, some looking at preventing breeding grounds for OCGs, for example with the “Mini Police”, and in communities in terms of developing skills.

Councillor J Maitland asked if in terms of the baled waste, could there not be a trace in terms of the packaging used. DCI Dave Aston noted that at waste management processing tracking and forensic evidence can be gathered. He added that some HGVs were found to be used and some arrests had been made, and also that another element was to undertake preventative work.

The Chairman asked how Councillors could help directly. DCI Dave Aston noted by utilising their local Neighbourhood Inspector and Community Support Teams, together with channels such as the Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings. He added it was possible to leave details via the 101 number and/or with partner agencies such as the Council’s Trading Standards or Environment Agency. DCI Dave Aston stressed that if an issues was sensitive they could contact Police Headquarters, however, if an issue was sufficiently serious, the usual emergency 999 telephone number would be the appropriate method as to pass on the details.

Mr J Welch asked, given that the time of year and the darker nights, was there a link to the season and illegal works such as the waste bales as previously described. DCI Dave Aston noted this was not an area he had looked at personally, and the Senior Partnership Officer, Graham McArdle noted that there was not a clear indication with such crimes all year round.

The Chairman asked, in terms newer areas of crime for our area, for example cybercrime and human trafficking, was there the capacity to be able to deal with issues within the Constabulary. DCI Dave Aston noted that there was capacity, though with a need to flex and look at what areas represented the biggest threats or presented the most harm.

It was noted that the most serious cybercrime “threats” would likely be from abroad and that this would then be an issue for the National Crime Agency (NCA) to look at. In terms of the more domestic cybercrime activities, they usually were based around a scam that would look for human error to allow criminals access. It was noted that education was important and that especially for the more vulnerable in our communities.

Councillor D Stoker noted that there had been many scams in the recent past in terms of callers claiming to be your internet service provider asking you to “just log on”. He added in the past it was possible to see the number was suspect, however recently criminals have been able to buy “local codes” such that call that originated in a foreign country could appear to be from Nottingham for example. DCI Dave Aston noted that these types of criminal were very polished and often very plausible, always looking to exploit any loophole and urged people to be super-cautious if the call was unsolicited.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred to the review group’s recommendations as set out in Appendix 2 to the report. He reminded Members of the work of the relevant partners having help deliver the Local Profiles Document and the importance of community confidence in reporting.

Members noted Recommendation 4, and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Environment Agency had been completed, with intelligence being key. Members noted training and awareness raising sessions that had been held with Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) and Overview and Scrutiny, with the Council’s Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager and Corporate Procurement looking at the risk to the Authority by OCGs, and on how to spot the signs.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that Members were asked to agree the work as complete, with no requirement for further updates upon the review recommendations.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee note no further require for updates upon the review recommendations.

**8 Safe Durham Partnership Strategic Assessment 2017 and Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2018-21 Priorities**

The Chairman introduced the Partnership Manager, Julie Bradbrook and the Senior Partnership Officer, Graham McArdle to give a presentation on the Safe Durham Partnership Strategic Assessment 2017 and Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) Plan 2018-21 Priorities (for copy see file of minutes).

The Senior Partnership Officer noted that the headline statistic was that overall crime had increased by 28%, however, added it was important to understand why. Members were reminded of the excellent reputation of Durham Constabulary and their accurate recording of crime, capturing a true picture of what was happening. It was added that this should also be understood in the total number of crimes and that for County Durham this was lower than the England and Wales average, and significantly lower than the North East average. The Committee noted that there was close work with the Police in terms of the evidence base.

The Partnership Manager noted that there were a number of draft priorities for 2017/18, with the first being to “protect vulnerable people from harm”, including from domestic abuse, sexual violence and hate crime. It was explained that there was a need to help provide confidence in terms of reporting of those crimes and that a figure of 202 hate crimes was felt to represent a vast underreporting of these crimes.

The Senior Partnership Officer noted another priority was “reducing reoffending”, looking to prevent repeat offending and prevent intergenerational offending. Members noted that there was work with the Police, Victims’ and Crime Commissioner (PCVC) in terms of looking at pathways out of offending and that partners would be able to understand the pathways in order to be help direct individuals to try and prevent reoffending.

The Partnership Manager explained that there was a priority in terms of Counter Terrorism and the Prevention of Violent Extremism, and while this may appear to be a more national issue, there was a need to raise awareness and to know what to look out for and what to do. It was added that there would be work within schools, looking at vulnerable groups, training for a range of partners and briefings for AAPs and Members. The Senior Partnership Officer noted that the Home Office had visited Durham and had been impressed in terms of Prevent and with the engagement in all mainstream schools. He noted that the work could not stop, and there would need to be updates at schools in terms of prevent and intervention.

The Senior Partnership Officer noted “Alcohol and substance misuse harm reduction” was a priority, noting the connection to most crime and with 95% of the Integrated Offender Management cohort having a drug problem.

The Partnership Manager explained a further priority was “promote being safe and feeling safe in your environment” and this included a number areas including: safe and wellbeing visits; open water safety; road casualty reduction; and anti-social behaviour. Members were reminded that a target approach was used in County Durham and this helped in being able to address local issues.

The Senior Partnership Officer noted “Cybercrime” was a priority, noting that it was important to raise awareness about staying safe online, to target preventative work towards reducing the risk to the most vulnerable, and to support local businesses to build resilience to cyber threats. It was noted there were around 6 million cybercrimes each year in the context to 6 million “traditional” crimes nationally and it was emerging as a growing and significant issue. Members noted that a recently held sessions as regards issues of cybercrime, Prevent and CSE had 260 people attend, with many professionals who were very much attuned to these issues and the vulnerable people they worked with. The Senior Partnership Officer explained that in respect of elderly and vulnerable people, assistance could be given in terms of telephone blocking or diverting to another family member, noting that technology could help in terms of nuisance calling.

The Partnership Manager explained that next steps would include: the draft Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2018-21 being presented to the SDP to agree wider consultation in January 2018; the consultation to be held January-February 2018 with the AAPs and the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and the final version of the Plan to be presented to the SDP for agreement in March 2018. It was noted that the Committee were being asked: “were the strategic priorities in relation to community safety correct”; and “were there any gaps”.

The Chairman thanked the Partnership Manager and the Senior Partnership Officer and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Mr J Welch asked if it was possible to block e-mail similar to the call blocking described. The Senior Partnership Officer noted he was not sure, however he could look into the issue. Mr J Welch and Councillor L Kennedy asked as regards the phone system, and how it was advertised. The Senior Partnership Officer noted the scheme was ran via Age UK and the funding had been provided by the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner.

Councillor L Kennedy noted that there appeared to be a rise in "unclassified" crimes and asked if this was due to how they were recorded. The Senior Partnership Officer noted he could come back to Members, noting that a shift had been made in terms how anti-social behaviour and harassment were recorded. Councillor L Kennedy asked how the £300,000 fund in relation to domestic abuse was accessed. The Senior Partnership Officer noted the contact Officer would be the Public Health Portfolio Lead, Tammy Ross within the Public Health Service.

Councillor L Kennedy noted that often when issues of anti-social behaviour were reported, there was not much in terms of feedback on actions and outcomes and asked how this could be improved. The Chairman noted that this was important to be able to give confidence in the systems in place and to encourage people to report matters. The Senior Partnership Officer noted that a lot of good work was done by the SDP and there was a need to be able to get into communities more to test on this. Councillor L Kennedy noted that even a simple text message back would be a help.

*Councillor A Bainbridge left the meeting at 10.32am*

Mr AJ Cooke noted the good work in terms of County Durham and Darlington's force area and asked if there was a comparison to others, or a national standard. The Senior Partnership Officer explained that Durham had a 28% increase in crime, Greater Manchester had a 2% increase. It was added that Durham was one of the best forces in terms of recording crime and that as other forces also improved, the picture would become clearer. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that the Police and Crime Panel received feedback from the PCVC following inspections from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) to which a future inspection report would include crime recording.

Mr AJ Cooke noted he had one of the call blockers as described installed and it had been beneficial. Councillor A Patterson added caution that information received at another Overview and Scrutiny Committee that blocking devices had prevented some calls from services such as Housing Benefit.

The Chief Fire Officer asked if there could be further explanation to the significant change in the accuracy of crime recording in comparison to 2015. The Senior Partnership Officer noted that accuracy had improved and had improved year on year over the last 10 years. The Chief Fire Officer noted that this context would be useful for the Committee to be able to see the difference in the accuracy of the figures, and the figures together, to be able to understand where issues are and how they have changed over time.

Councillor J Maitland asked what crimes would be classified under "unclassified". The Senior Partnership Officer noted that it was a small number 219, and would look to find this information and get back to the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

Councillor J Turnbull noted anti-social behaviour at North Road in Durham City, with regular issues at the bus station and asked why this did not seem to be picked up. Councillor K Thompson noted approaches to feeding back information to the Police through Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings. Councillor D Stoker commented that as other Members had stated it was important to get feedback for reporting of issues from Durham Constabulary but it was also important to get feedback from the Council too.

Councillor A Patterson commented that areas, such as anti-social behaviour, open water safety and road traffic safety, could be promoted more, to include "protection". The Chairman added that arson had seen a significant increase and felt that this should have more significance at the Partnership Priorities. The Chairman reminded Members that they could have further opportunity to feed in and to contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer with any further comments.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That a response to the Safe Durham Partnership containing comments from the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the draft strategic objectives be sent to the Safe Durham Partnership Board.
- (iii) That the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further presentation in relation to the Safe Durham Partnership Plan in February 2018.

**9 Progress of recommendations following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Home Safety - Safe and Wellbeing Visits**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer introduced the Community Safety Group Manager, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS), Steve Wharton and the Public Health Portfolio Lead, Tim Wright who were in attendance to give an update on progress with recommendations following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Home Safety - Safe and Wellbeing Visits (SWVs) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Community Safety Group Manager thanked the Committee for their support in relation to the issue and the value that was added. He also noted thanks to former Councillor T Nearney who had chaired the review, his hard work being very much appreciated.

Members were referred to recommendation one, in relation to reviewing the framework document, and it was explained that the evaluation undertaken by Teesside University was due to be completed by March 2018, however, it was explained that no major issues were emerging. In terms of recommendation two, Members noted that partners, including Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), would need to look at the data collected from the SWVs in order to help focus resources where there was need. It was added an example had been the NHS Falls Team being able to look for hotspot and target, though again further progress would follow the evaluation by Teesside University.

The Community Safety Group Manager noted recommendation three had looked for the SWV scheme to be monitored through regular reporting to the SDP Board and Health and Wellbeing Board.



Members noted that the reporting would look at successes, challenges and risks, and whether partners had the ability to be able to cope with increased demand for their services. It was added that Fire Crews had been able to see the positive impact of their work and this was important to help Crews see the value they were adding.

The Community Safety Group Manager explained that recommendation four had been in relation to quality assurance in terms of the activities on outcomes of the SWVs with partner agencies, to ensure consistency. It was noted that feedback from Crews had helped in improving the forms used for the SWVS. Members noted that telephone feedback from those who had received SWVs was collated and that in terms of wider quality assurance, the evaluation from Teesside University would look to provide feedback on this.

The Public Health Portfolio Lead noted recommendation five had referred to a seminar to be held to deliver information for Members in terms of SWVs and for the scheme be promoted locally with Town and Parish Councils and AAPs. It was noted that a seminar was planned, to be delivered by Public Health and CDDFRS and that AAPs had provided input in terms of SWVs from Members of the Service that attended each AAP. It was added that the CDDFRS was in the process of writing out to all Town and Parish Councils in terms of information and to offer attendance at a convenient meeting if required.

Members noted that recommendation six was that the SDP Board looked at the opportunities in terms of issues of cybercrime and fraud to be included within the Safer Homes project. It was explained that this was something that would be considered as part of the evaluation, though the Community Safety Group Manager noted that there was a need to understand that there could not be an endless expansion, and that what works should not be diluted. The Chief Fire Officer added that a caveat to recommendation 6 was that SWVs were as part of a National Joint Council trial and that with ongoing Fire Brigade Union issues it was important to continue to link the activities within SWVs to core fire activities.

The Public Health Portfolio Lead noted that in terms of recommendation four, it was a very complex agenda and that the challenge was on behavior change, and to be able to have incremental change to build, and therefore expectations should be set realistically in terms of the evaluation. He added that the scale that CDDFRS had been able to engage was impressive and in "making every contact count" their work had been of very good credit to them.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their update and noted that it was good that Overview and Scrutiny feedback had been taken on board and thanked the CDDFRS and Public Health for their hard work.

Councillor L Kennedy noted feedback was provided once a week and asked if this was prioritised in certain cases. The Community Safety Group Manager noted that in issues of safeguarding, information would be fed back immediately, however it was noted that to allow partners to focus then once a week was found to be preferable.

Councillor H Little noted that in providing information to Town and Parish Councils, this may impact upon demand. The Community Safety Group Manager noted the target was for 18,000 SWVs and that while some visits may last two hours, some may only be a few minutes. He added that capacity was looked at, with caseloads being monitored.

The Chairman asked how we would know that the SWVs were not duplicating work, for example where the other organisations, such as the County Durham Housing Group (CDHG), were visiting residents.

The Community Safety Group Manager noted that there were Memorandum of Understanding with Livin and the CDHG, and reminded Members that the main focus from the CDDFRS was in terms of preventing fire harm and reducing those risks, with SWVs targeting the most vulnerable specifically.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That a further update on the progress with recommendations on the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Home Safety - Safe and Wellbeing Visits be received by the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in May 2018.

## **10 Overview and Scrutiny Review Updates**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update in respect of reviews: Cybercrime and Arson and Secondary Deliberate Fires.

In respect of Cybercrime, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that there had been two meetings of the Working Group, looking at preventing individuals getting involved in hacking and offending and also in terms of education, awareness and engagement. He noted the next meeting of the group would involve Officers from the North East Regional Specialist Operations Unit and colleagues from the Offender Management Unit.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted an opportunity for 3 -4 Members to work with Police Cadets either on 14 or 30 November and volunteers could e-mail him as regards expressing an interest. The Vice-Chairman, and Chairman of the Working Group, councillor H Liddle noted that raising awareness was important, including with parents/grandparents in addition to young people themselves.

In relation to Arson and Secondary Deliberate Fires a focus group, which included local Members, had been held and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer would pull together a response from Overview and Scrutiny to be then forwarded to the Safe Durham Partnership and Portfolio Holder.

**Resolved:**

That the verbal update be noted.

## **11 Police and Crime Panel**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update in respect of the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel, the agenda papers for Committee having been dispatch prior to the Panel meeting.

It was noted the main issues were: budget consultation, the preliminary work prior to full consultation in January; the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) links to reducing reoffending; an update on Checkpoint; and the Quarterly Performance Report, noting the crime and anti-social behaviour statistics being at Neighbourhood Level.

### **Resolved:**

That the verbal update be noted.