

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 **Friday 2 November 2018** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Bainbridge, J Charlton, J Considine, R Crute, D Hall, C Hampson, A Hopgood (substitute for D Stoker), S Iveson, L Kennedy, H Liddle, J Maitland, J Nicholson, A Patterson, J Stephenson, J Turnbull and C Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Balls and Mr A J Cooke

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Mavin and K Thompson, D Stoker and K Thompson and Chief Superintendent A Green.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor A Hopgood substituted for Councillor D Stoker.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held 21 September 2018 were agreed as a correct records and signed by the Chairman.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee noted that in relation to page six of the minutes, in reference to the Probation Service, Councillor S Iveson had asked for the number of high risk offenders managed in our area. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted a response had been forwarded from the Head of the NPS – Durham and that the number for the Durham and Darlington area was 610.

The Committee were informed that in respect of page seven of the minutes, Mr AJ Cooke had asked as regards policies in place relating to the handover of offenders to the Police. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that Chief Superintendent A Green had offered to lead a development session in this regard if Members felt this would be helpful.

Members noted in reference to page 10 and the Performance Report, it was noted that a joint workshop session for Members of the Children and Young People's and Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees in respect of the JTAI Action Plan would be held on 8 November 2018.

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.

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 "new charter to crack down on illegal loan sharks", with the County Durham Savers Project working in partnership with Durham Constabulary, the Office of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner (PCVC), Area Action Partnerships (AAPs), the Illegal Money Lending Team, the NE First Credit Union and Karbon Homes; and "Police urging motorists to keep cars safe this winter", the annual programme of winter road safety messages, linking to the agenda item on road safety.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Safe Durham Partnership Board

The Chairman introduced Assistant Chief Constable, Durham Constabulary, Dave Orford who, as Chair of the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP), was in attendance give Members an update in relation to the SDP Board.

The Chair of the SDP noted that he had undertaken partnership working throughout his Police career and reminded Members that partners did not just come together at SDP Board meetings, they worked together all the time to help deliver for our communities. He explained that the vision for the SDP was for "A county where every adult and child will be, and feel, safe", with the SDP Plan 2016-19, "Altogether Safer" to deliver on this. It was noted that through a peer review to the strength of the SDP had been noted.

The Committee noted the evidence based MoRiLE (Management of Risk in Law Enforcement) approach, with key themes being: alcohol; sexual offences; road traffic, those killed or seriously injured (KSI); drug use; and organised crime. It was explained that "cyber enabled" was a cross-cutting theme. The Chair of the SDP noted there were also emerging issues such as modern slavery and human trafficking.

Councillors noted that all partners understood that it was essential to keep the public informed and “on board” to ensure confidence and satisfaction. It was added that this was a current area of focus and other areas included vulnerability strands, specifically: domestic abuse; sexual offences; “missing from home”, children, young people and adults; and cross-cutting themes such as alcohol and mental health.

The Chair of the SDP referred Members to a number of tables and graphs relating to: overall crime; crime perception and anti-social behaviour (ASB); reoffending; domestic violence and drug and alcohol harm reduction. The Committee noted that the increase in crime, in the context of Durham Constabulary having been noted by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) as having very accurate crime recording. It was added that while some increase was in relation to new recording methodology there were also new crimes with examples given including online fraud and online harassment. Members were made aware of the volume of crime and the partnership work between Neighbourhood Policing Teams, AAPs and the Council in terms of being able to have an understanding of the “real” level of crime. The Chair of the SDP highlighted that the “solved rate” had also increased, and also schemes such as Checkpoint were proving to be very positive. Members noted working with the Probation Service and the work undertaken to reduce reoffending and the importance of information sharing in this regard. The Committee were reminded that a lot of work had been undertaken in the last few years in terms of encouraging reporting of crime and increasing the public’s confidence to do so.

The Chair of the SDP explained the Partnership priorities, from July 2017: protecting vulnerable people from harm; reducing reoffending; alcohol and substance misuse harm reduction; counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism; promote being safe and feeling safe in your environment; and cybercrime. Councillors noted that, through their partnership approach, the SDP were continuing to understand and tackle barriers to safer communities and vulnerable people, as well as continuing to respond to change and effectively promote safer communities. Members noted that the SDP was also addressing the wider social determinants of community safety. The Chair of the SDP noted the activities and work undertaken by the partnership and noted the need to be outcome focussed and to target reducing resources effectively. He explained a lot of the work being undertaken was proactive, although there was positive reactive work undertaken when necessary, for example in relation to arson and water safety.

The Chair of the SDP noted challenges faced by the SDP included: community intelligence and engagement; reduction of resources; and protecting the most vulnerable. He concluded by noting the next steps would be: the development of the next SDP Partnership Plan in Spring 2019; to work together to add value and coordinate delivery; and to inform partners and build opportunities.

The Chairman thanked the Chair of the SDP and asked Members of the Committee for their comments and questions.

Councillor C Wilson noted a scheme “Making the Link”, in relation to the known links between violence to animals often then leading to violence against people and asked if this was something the SDP was aware of. The Chair of the SDP noted the association had been known to criminology for a number of years and asked if information on the scheme could be sent to him via the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

Mr AJ Cooke noted the statistics in relation to reoffending and asked if there were any specific reasons or commonalities, for example linked to the economy. The Chief Executive, Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (DTVCR), Bronwyn Elphick noted that there were a number of circumstances that could impact on reoffending more widely, an example given being the reduction and changes in services nationally, such as drug and alcohol services and the introduction of Universal Credit. She added that this was not necessarily the case in our area, and reiterated that County Durham and Darlington was not a hotspot in terms of reoffending. The Chair of the SDP added that information to be able to provide early and bespoke interventions was important in reducing reoffending. He explained that there was no "one size fits all" approach, although there was a process and an order to follow, and indeed some individuals may need to go through the process more than once. Members noted that to ensure the best outcomes it was important for all agencies involved to link together, not only in terms of intelligence sharing, but also in being able to understand the budgetary and resources pressures faced by each organisation.

Councillor J Maitland asked as regards road traffic accidents (RTAs) and if there were numbers in terms of those falling asleep at the wheel. The Chair of the SDP noted in his experience this had not been a large issue in our area, he added that the spike in RTAs had led to a piece of work looking at your people, risks, locations that maybe hotspots and work by the PCVC in our schools. Councillor J Charlton asked as regards open water safety work. The Chair of the SDP noted this was an area where a lot of good work had been undertaken and noted this was an area that was reported to the Committee on a regular basis.

Councillor J Considine asked as regards reoffending and whether the issue of prisoners being unable to access the process to apply for Universal Credit prior to their release, delaying benefit payments, was an issue and was there anything that could be done to help and improve the situation. The Chair of the SDP noted that those involved were aware of this gap and MPs in the region had raised the issue at the national level. The Chief Executive, DTVCR noted that the current situation was they could not apply before release from prison and the £47 grant upon leaving prison would not bridge the delay in benefits they could face.

Councillor A Hopgood noted a recent television documentary featuring HMP Durham, and noted the adverse effects when people are released from prison. She added that she felt the vision of the SDP was excellent though suggested that the "feel" and "be" safe be placed in the opposite order as when people feel safe then they will think they are safe. The Chair of the SDP noted this, and the Chief Executive, DTVCR noted she had regular meeting with colleague from the Prison Service and noted methods of segregation within prisons, to prevent drug sales and that identifying and targeting was key.

Councillor D Hall asked if the detection rate in respect of crimes having seen a reduction was relation to issues such as witness intimidation, and was this possibility factored in, especially in cases of online abuse and intimidation. The Chair of the SDP noted this was not an issue that had been raised in our Force Area, though he added he would look at the figures for our area to see if there was any issues. He explained that the Police use of social media was in general extremely positive, with good feedback from Members of the public.

The Strategic Manager – Partnerships, Andrea Petty noted that feedback on the SDP Plan would be reported back to Committee at its meeting in February 2019.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

8 Probation Services - Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company

The Chairman asked the Chief Executive, Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (DTVCR), Bronwyn Elphick to give Members an update in relation to the work of the Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company.

The Chief Executive, DTVCR noted she would remind Members of the national context in terms of CRCs and provide an update in reference to the DTVCR.

Members were asked to recall the Government process of “Transforming Rehabilitation” and the bidding process for the creation of CRCs and the success of the ARCC Partnership in securing the contract for DTVCR, ARCC being the only partnership arrangement and the only not-for-profit CRC in the country, the majority being large multinational companies. She explain that in general there had been far reaching criticisms around the reforms so far, and it was added that the model was “payment by results” and had proven to be extremely complex. Members noted that most CRCs had not seen a reduction in reoffending and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) had reacted by launching a further consultation, with contract specifications changing as a result. The Chief Executive, DTVCR explained that the second round of CRC contract would therefore be implemented from Autumn 2020 rather than in 2022.

It was explained that in addition to the contract specification changes, there would also be boundary and geography changes, to have 10 regional CRCs and one for Wales, aligning with the National Probation Service (NPS) boundaries, effectively merging the DTVCR with the Northumbria CRC, with the partnership bidding for both areas.

The Chief Executive, DTVCR noted that DTVCR had been described as an “outlier” in relation to other CRCs at a Parliament Select Committee, noting that it was a non-for-profit organisation that was “making it work”. She added that DTVCR had fed around £500,000 back into the CRC to help with its work. Members noted there were good working relationships with both the NPS and the PCVC which were beneficial to all partners involved in reducing reoffending.

It was explained that DTVCR was the second smallest CRC, was in the top quarter performance against contract, and staff morale was very good. Members noted that a gap that had been identified was in relation to links to local employers. It was highlighted that the relationship with the NPS was praised in all audits and inspections that had been carried out.

The Chief Executive, DTVCR noted that the CRC supervised around 4,000 participants, with 830 in County Durham and Darlington. She explained that 90% received face-to-face supervision in local community based venues.

It was noted that the approach taken was evidence based, helping to break down barriers, and that it helped community integration and provided a one-stop-shop with resources from partners being available.

The Committee were referred to slides setting out statistics of caseloads for Probation Officers and noted the operational delivery in County Durham and Darlington.

The Chief Executive, DTVCRC reminded Members of the delivery hubs, and various schemes operated in conjunction with partners and relevant agencies. Members noted an innovative scheme, a “running club” for those linked to substance misusers within the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme. Councillors noted how the scheme helped in terms of occupying participants’ time, help with their health and fitness and also provided a good opportunity for conversations while running, providing good peer support. The Chief Executive, DTVCRC explained that the DTVCRC was involved with the PCVCs “one journey approach” to map the female offender journey from Court to Prison to release and had supported the PCVC bids for MoJ funding. Members learned that the DTVCRC unpaid work clients had carried out approximately 5,000 hours of unpaid work on a number of projects, including: The Deans Park Project; parks adopted by Durham Wildlife Trust; and Finchale College. Members noted several quote from local organisations praising the unpaid work undertaken which was of great benefit to those organisations and local communities.

The Chief Executive, DTVCRC noted that in terms of issues going forward, ARCC were awaiting the outcome of a second bid and the consultation on Probation. It was added that there was continued “joint responsibility” in terms of the partnership approach, though with perhaps some gaps in terms of the health and local authority priority groups. She noted that other areas that would be explored included: better alignment of local employers with service users; services for white males, over 24 years old, and with substance misuse problems; the appetite for co-commissioning; PCVC involvement; and to ensure that DTVCRC continued to be woven into the fabric of our local communities.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive, DTVCRC and asked Members of the Committee for their comments and questions.

Mr D Balls noted that initially when the Transforming Rehabilitation process had begun many were vehemently opposed to the splitting and privatisation of probation services, in terms of the CRCs. He added that he felt that DTVCRC was an exception to this and had performed very well, in contrast to the maxim “bigger is better”. He suggested that other CRCs could learn best practice from the DTVCRC. The Chief Executive, DTVCRC agreed with Mr D Balls in terms of what the initial reaction to Transforming Rehabilitation had been in some quarters. She thanked him for his support and noted that the ARCC approach had been highlighted within the latest consultation as an example of best practice. She noted the good relationships that DTVCRC had with the NPS and MoJ, however, reiterated that the bidding process was competitive, adding she felt ARCC had a proven, strong track record. The Chairman added she understood there was a good relationship with the NPS, with the Head of the NPS – Durham having presented an update report at the last meeting of the Committee.

Councillor D Hall asked if the contract allowed for preventative work to be undertaken in addition to that described. The Chief Executive, DTVCRC explained that the contract was complex, however, did allow for such work.

She added there was a diversion scheme in Cleveland that CRC staff were involved with and while prevention would in turn reduced the numbers coming through the CRC, it was seen as the right thing to do, preventing people entering the system, and this point had been made in the bid submitted.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

9 County Durham Road Safety Partnership

The Chairman introduced Strategic Traffic Manager, and Chair of the SDP's Road Casualty Reduction Partnership, Dave Wafer, who was in attendance give Members an update in relation to Road Casualties in 2017.

The Strategic Traffic Manager noted that most figures within the presentation were for 2017, with some being for 2016 where this was the most up-to-date data and that had been published nationally for comparison. He noted that there had been an increase in all casualties, when compared to the 2010-14 baseline figures and previous years' figures, and with the regional and County Durham increases being greater than the national average. Members were referred to a graph comparing local authorities, with all road users, KSIs per billion vehicle miles for 2016. It was explained that County Durham was in the second quartile, comparing favourably with other local authorities, however the increase being 8% from 2016 and 18% above the baseline figure. He noted, from discussions nationally in relation to the increasing figures, it was not certain as whether there were issues in relation to reporting and whether this would even out after a period.

The Strategic Traffic Manager explained that the year-to-date figures for 2018 were such that should the trend continue, the numbers would be down by around one-third, with a significant reduction. He noted with sadness there had been 9 fatalities in 2018, adding that this was a low number in terms of comparison, with these figures falling year-on-year.

In relation to pedestrians, it was explained that numbers remained similar year-on-year, with a decrease regionally, and a slight decrease in comparison to the baseline figures for County Durham. It was noted that the County and the region both compared favourably nationally, with more urban areas having higher numbers of pedestrian casualties.

Members learned in respect of cyclist casualties there was a steady decrease in the figures, despite there being an increasing number of cyclists using our roads. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted this was good news and reiterated as predominately a rural county, Durham did not have a many incidents as more urban areas.

The Committee were informed that in terms of motorcycle users, numbers were roughly static in relation overall casualties, however, this was offset by a rise in the number of KSIs in Durham compared to the previous year.

The Strategic Traffic Manager explained that noted that in terms of children up to five years old the region and County Durham had fewer overall casualties, however, comparing nationally performance was in the lower quartile. He added that 2018 figures may highlight improvement when published.

Members noted that in comparison, young people aged 17 to 24 years old showed very good performance with a significant decrease and with comparison with other areas shown Durham in the upper quartile. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted that it would be important to try and understand why there was this difference between the age groups, suggesting that the younger children were more likely to be pedestrians and those aged 17-24 more likely to be in a vehicle.

Councillors noted in terms of older people, aged 70 and older there had been an increase in the number of casualties, however, while there was an increase in the number of older people nationally, there had been a greater increase in the number of older people as a proportion of the population in County Durham. It was added that while the trend was not in the direction we would wish, the performance when compared nationally was good, being in the upper quartile.

The Strategic Traffic Manager referred Members to a list of road safety projects that had been delivered, including: the 20mph Limits Project; Junior Road Safety Officer; WiseDrive; Safety Carousels; BikeWise; SAGE; Excelerate; car seat fitting and checking; Police enforcement activities; Road Safety Great Britain (RSGB) North East campaigns; AAP Road Safety Initiative pilot; and Business Road Safety.

The Committee noted that for 2019 there would be a new targeted approach, with: mapping of all casualties by AAP area; school based carousels; community based road safety; and a young driver scheme.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Traffic Manager and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor A Hopgood noted the statistics in terms of up to five years old and those aged 17-24 years old and asked as regards those in between, aged six to 16 years old. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted that those categories were those reported nationally and there did not seem to be an issue in relation to that age group. Councillor A Hopgood asked if issues such as the darker winter nights have an impact on figures. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted it did and that changing driving conditions also had an effect, and that it was more important at this time to raise the issue of "being visible". The Chairman asked if removal of streetlights and replacement of sodium lamps with LED lights had made an impact. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted he did not know of any statistics that showed this and noted no issues or concerns in this regard, with the LED light being white and of a better quality.

Mr AJ Cooke asked as regards further education of road users in terms of the dangers, noting for example he had witnessed several drivers using their mobile phones on the way to the meeting. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted that distraction of drivers was a huge issue and that Government had increased the penalties associated and there was increased Police activity in this regard. He noted that the message would get through to the public over time, however, he added that many of the national campaigns that would have been widely publicised in previous years were no longer as widespread on traditional media, he added however, there was a lot more activity on social media in this regard.

Councillor D Hall asked if it was possible to drill down into the child casualty statistics, to look at whether the perception of road safety issues matched reality.

He asked as regards accidents with no casualties, whether they were recorded or triggered an action and also as regards the consistency in terms of speed surveys on roads when looking at concerns relating to speeding. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted that in terms of child casualties there was evidence of a correlation with more incidents in areas of deprivation, adding that in terms of breaking down the causes, that was more challenging. He added that in terms of junctions and other areas of concern, there was in many cases hidden measures that could be incorporated into the design to make people drive safer. He noted there was some data in terms of incidents where there was damage only, for example upon speaking to maintenance teams, however, priority was given to those incidents with casualties. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted that in relation to speed limits, drivers in general would drive to the road conditions presented to them, and that while speed limits and signage was one approach, in some instances physical measures to modify the road environment would be preferable, however, this solution required more resources. The Chairman noted that when Members sitting on Planning Committees received accident information it was often that they were told there were no incidents on a particular road, however, Members would know of incidents without casualties. The Strategic Traffic Manager said that all incidents with an injury would be recorded in the statistics given to Members.

Councillor J Considine asked as regards issues in terms of uninsured drivers. Superintendent Richie Allen, Durham Constabulary noted that with the technology now available to Officers it was easier to access data in relation uninsured driver and also to seize and crush vehicles as appropriate. He added he could look to bring statistics on this back to the Committee. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted that the chance of uninsured drivers being caught was now very high.

Mr D Balls asked if accidents near to schools were as a consequence of the number of parents dropping or picking up their children at the school, a result of the large number of vehicles those times. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted that while school start and finish times can seem chaotic, a lot of the time the traffic is moving very slowly and there are not a large number of incidents in these areas. He added that in terms of child casualties, they were more often further away from schools, closer to children's homes, noting it was very important that children were taught to cross roads safely.

Councillor C Wilson noted an example in her area of poor visibility due to parking laybys and that suggestions for a mirror on trees opposite had been rejected and asked what the criteria was and what other measures may be possible in such cases. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted that in terms of the placement of mirrors there was national guidelines and criteria that local authorities must follow and in some cases a mirror could give drivers a false sense of security. He noted depending upon the exact conditions then it may be possible to remove parking, or bring any give way markers forward or make other physical changes.

Councillor R Crute noted that deprivation had been cited as a factor in relation to child casualties and asked why this was not a factor with older people, referring to the graphs presented that showed areas such as Westminster and Chelsea with higher numbers of incidents with older people. The Strategic Traffic Manager noted that it may relate to the numbers of older people in those areas and the density and volume of traffic in those city locations.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

10 Overview and Scrutiny Review Updates

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update in relation to the review activities of the Committee.

He noted the progress in terms of a Working Group that would look at the Road Safety Strategy, to provide feedback to the Road Safety Partnership, and would provide further information to Members in respect of this issue in due course.

It was added that in relation to the Joint Working Group with the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to Private Children's Residential Care Homes that the initial meeting had taken place and there had been positive feedback from the meeting. He explained that there would be a focus session held with those Members that had Residential Care Homes in their Division. Councillor A Hopgood noted that this was very useful. Councillor R Crute added that the initial meeting of the Group had been very positive and had highlighted several important issues, including in relation to new care homes and planning.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

11 Police and Crime Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update report in respect of the Police and Crime Panel (PCP), noting issues considered at the last meeting of the Panel included: the appointment of a new Chief Executive to the Office of the PCVC, Stephen White, who would take up the post in early 2019.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that information in terms items relating to Quarter One Performance Report and outcomes relating to the Police, Crime and Victims' Plan would be circulated to Members.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.