

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 **Monday 24 June 2019** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Avery, R Crute, G Huntington, H Liddle, E Mavin, A Shield (substitute for J Charlton) and J Turnbull

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Balls and Mr A J Cooke

Also Present:

Councillors L Hovvels

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bainbridge, A Batey, D Hall, C Hampson, L Kennedy, J Maitland, D Stoker, C Wilson and Chief Fire Officer S Errington.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor A Shield substituted for Councillor J Charlton.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillors B Avery and J Turnbull declared an interest in Item 7 - Arson and Deliberate Secondary Fires in East Durham as members of the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue 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, Jonathan Slee 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: "Streetgames Outstanding Community Contribution Award" – linking to the work undertaken by the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS), the Council and partners, at Item 7 on the agenda; "New Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary announced" – following the hearing at the Police and Crime Panel on 6 June 2019, Jo Farrell, formerly Deputy Chief Constable, was confirmed as the new Chief Constable; and "Water warning to keep children safe in Durham this summer" – linking to the work programme, noting the work of the Council and partners on the "Dying to be Cool" campaigns and school assemblies on the subject.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Arson and Deliberate Secondary Fires in East Durham

The Chair introduced District Manager, Phil Innis, CDDFRS to give an update presentation on Arson and Deliberate Secondary Fires in East Durham (for copy see file of minutes).

The District Manager reminded Members the issue of arson and deliberate secondary fires had been identified as an issue around 12-18 months ago and he had attended working group session in October 2017 with Members of the Committee and Members from the areas with higher rates of arson within the East Durham area. He reminded the Committee that primary fires generally involved property and secondary fires included the burning of rubbish or refuse.

Councillors were referred to four years of statistics for the County Durham and Darlington area, noting the disproportionately high demand in terms of both deliberate primary and secondary fires in the Easington area. It was noted that the change over four years in terms of primary fires was now plus 21 percent, a significant improvement over percentages of 127 percent previously. It was explained that in terms of tackling primary fires, there had been a 21 percent year on year reduction. The District Manager noted that it was a challenge and that there was an element linked to organised crime groups (OCGs) and local feuds. Members were referred to the statistics relating to deliberate secondary fires, noting a six percent reduction year on year. It was explained that the Electoral Division with the most deliberate secondary fires remained Shotton and Haswell, with only a reduction of six fires year on year, from 88 to 82, not a significant reduction. The District Manager noted that nationally there had been an increase in fire setting. He added there had been four time-limited projects carried out in: Horden and Peterlee; Shotton Colliery; Wheatley Hill; and Thorney and Wingate. The District Manager noted that there was a correlation in terms of loose refuse and the number of deliberate secondary fires.

The Committee noted the partners involved in the work included: CDDFRS; DCC; Durham Constabulary; Peterlee Town Council; Shotton Partnership; Groundwork; Bernica Homes, County Durham Housing Group/East Durham Homes; East Durham Area Action Partnership (AAP) and Restorative Approaches.

The District Manager noted that work undertaken had included a multi-agency problem solving (MAPS) approach, with a deliberate fire reduction plan. He added that the multi-agency approach was much improved and there was a consistent approach in terms of the: rubbish removal process; abandoned vehicle removal scheme; and unsecure property protocol. It was explained that the "FireStoppers" number had helped and that Firestoppers was a trial with Crimestoppers and Year 2 of the trial had led to the expansion of the trial across the Northumberland and Tyne and Wear fire service areas.

Members were referred to the use of social media in terms of communication, helping people understand what was going on in their area. The District Manager explained that in relation to youth engagement, there were activities related to "Streetgames" and "SportEd", one being held in the ASDA car park at Peterlee, with around 70 young people engaged, and the scheme having won the Outstanding Community Contribution award at the national Street Games Awards earlier in June. He noted that there was work ongoing with the Shotton Partnership to try and roll out similar activities in Shotton Colliery. The District Manager added that there was an eight-week project involving 10 young people at Peterlee Fire Station, involving Council partners from One-Point and the Team around the Family (TAF). He explained it looked at issues such as peer pressure, anger management and to help focus on the young people to change their behaviours.

The District Manager explained that the Fire Investigation, Arson Reduction and Young People Team was a multi-disciplined team formed in September 2018, with the young people agenda running through all activities.

He added that the Chief Fire Officer, Stuart Errington, had wrote to strategic leads across partner organisations in July 2018 to ask them to look at issues linked to the high numbers of fires and posed the question “are we getting to the root of the problem”. It was noted there was a lot of work looking at issues such as abandoned cars, unsecured properties and fly-tipping, with the Council undertaking a lot of work as regards the latter. The District Manager noted that the Council’s Neighbourhood Protection Manager, Ian Hault had noted that there had been 7,269 rubbish removals per calendar year by the Council’s Clean and Green Team.

The Chair thanked the District Manager and noted the good work that was being undertaken and the positive impact he had seen within his Electoral Division. He asked Members of the Committee for their comments and questions.

Councillor B Avery noted the involvement of the Community Action Team (CAT Team) in the Dean Bank area in his Electoral Division had a hugely positive impact, tackling issues of rubbish, vacant properties and asked if there was any way of looking to keep that momentum going once the CAT Team have left an area. The Chair agreed the work of the CAT Team was brilliant, however, it was resource intensive and it would not be possible to have them work over and over in the same area. Councillor B Avery asked if the Council’s charge on bulky waste collections had an impact in terms of rubbish and fires. The District Manager agreed the work of the CAT Team was excellent and they were a valuable resource in tackling difficult issues. He added it may be possible to look at their model and approach to help inform what work could be undertaken in the longer term and to look for a strategic approach. He noted that also a more proactive approach, rather than reactive, could impact more. Councillor B Avery noted that in some cases it can be an issue in terms of land ownership that can affect how quickly an issue can be resolved, noting partners such as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and asked what links the Council’s Environmental Services had with those types of partners.

Councillor A Shield noted the number of fires as reported was worrying and asked as regards why the County was number one in terms of primary fires and second or third in terms of secondary fires. The District Manager noted that the statistic was per 1,000 population and issues that increased the numbers had included the large number of car fires, noting the links to OCGs and with criminals be more forensically aware. He reiterated that the FireStoppers number was a way people could report fires and information anonymously and with confidence. Councillor A Shield asked how we would break the cycle, was it tackling OCGs or focusing on young people or some balance. The District Manager noted he felt if you were able to get to young people engaged early, through activities such as Streetgames then it may be possible to steer them away from OCGs and fire starting. He added that partners saw this as a priority area, and all would need to focus on a strategic view. He explained that Area Manager, CDDFRS, Keith Wanley was working with Durham Constabulary on the issue of car fires and it was felt that engaging with young people was an investment. The Chair noted he felt, especially in his local area, it was very important to engage with young people and the diversions and schemes as described were valuable. He asked as regards the hardcore element that would not engage, understanding this a difficult question.

The District Manager noted that the support of Overview and Scrutiny was welcome and referral pathways were important and also options such as out of court disposals. It was noted that many pathways were voluntary and being able to enforce as regards pathways was important.

Councillor A Shield noted that for younger children there was a number of options as regards engagement, for example the "Mini-Police" and Police and Fire Cadets, adding he felt a need to look at the 11-16 age group.

Councillor R Crute noted the figures for Durham and Darlington and asked what could be learned from this. He noted as regards the type of fires in the east of the county and if a housing issue could selective licensing help and reduce the impact of rubbish fires, working in partnerships with Housing Associations. The District Manager noted he was the District Manager for Darlington two years ago and explained that in many cases a positive impact upon the number of fires could come from a key arrest, with a marked reduction in fires following such an arrest. He added that selective licensing was welcomed and may help in the high impact areas, with private landlords and RSLs to work to help. The District Manager noted that legislation did not help in terms of clearing properties, especially those in private ownership and that the housing stock value in our area meant that there was a number of remote or absent landlords. Councillor R Crute noted that selective licensing was looking to be for the whole county and that this was moving forward, requiring approval from the Secretary of State.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted the work of the Committee in this regard and for response to be given to the Portfolio Holder and Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) Board and for further update information to be received.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That a response containing views on arson and deliberate secondary fires within the east Durham area be sent to the Cabinet portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services and the Chair of the Safe Durham Partnership Board.
- (iii) That a progress report on arson and deliberate secondary fires be included within the Committee's work programme.

8 Domestic Abuse - Update

The Chair introduced the Criminal Justice Programme Lead, Office of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner (PCVC), Jeanne Trotter who was in attendance to give an update in relation to Domestic Abuse (for copy see file of minutes).

The Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted she held the role for Durham and Cleveland and was the Chair of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG) of the SDP and therefore worked with the Local Authority and partners.

She explained that following a multi-agency event in March 2019 to review the DASVEG's "Plan on a Page" it had been agreed that the main objective continued to be relevant, though the related actions needed to be updated to reflect progress and next steps. She added that it was felt there was a need to have a focus on sexual violence, and to work with partners, such as Public Health to get the issue on the agenda more.

The Committee noted that the objectives were now: Objective One – reduction in repeat victims and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse; Objective Two – domestic abuse is prevented by early intervention; Objective Three – more invisible victims are identified and offered support. The Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted a fourth Objective relating to sexual violence would be added following the DASVEG meeting in May 2019.

Members were informed that in terms of Objective One, there were now three elements with the introduction of Multi-Agency Tasking and Co-ordination (MATAC) to compliment the work of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). The Criminal Justice Programme Lead explained that MARAC worked with high level domestic abuse victims, with MATAC to support preventative work. She added that there would be support in terms of a perpetrator programme and after a year the results would be assessed. It was noted that there was a range of intervention programmes ranging from a few days to 13 weeks, with funding from several sources. She added that the sustainability of funding was an issue that would be looked at. The Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted that Checkpoint was being looked at in terms of suitability for domestic violence, with Durham University evaluation having been completed. It noted that it was something that was felt could work in the future, although not at the current time.

The Committee learned that in relation to Objective Two, prevention through early intervention, there was a lot of work ongoing, including Operation Encompass, which had been expanded following recommendations from the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) and the "I am Me", "Being Me" and SELFIE projects to continue. The Criminal Justice Programme Lead explained that in terms of Objective Three, identifying invisible victims, the Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) was being piloted within healthcare settings, with e-learning packages for community pharmacy staff and GP training to be delivered and their links into MARAC strengthened. It was added that the "No less of a Man" campaign raising the profile of male victims of domestic abuse had been supported by the Partnership.

The Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted that following the JTAI, reporting arrangements between the DASVEG and Durham Safeguarding Partnership had been strengthened and MARAC processes had been reviewed with a hope to speed up responses. It was added that there had been a number of briefings with the National Probation Service (NPS) and Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (DTVCRC) to raise awareness of their role and responsibilities in relation to domestic abuse.

Councillors were informed as regards commissioning issues, with work ongoing in terms of joint commissioning across County Durham and Darlington, with Darlington colleagues to carry out their service review in the first instance. The Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted that there was a joint commissioning process between the Officer of the PCVC and Durham County Council with the specialist domestic abuse service continuing with April 2019.

The Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted that the terms of reference and membership of the DASVEG were being reviewed following the stakeholder event held in March 2019, revisions to be agreed at the May meeting. She concluded by explaining that the Deputy Director of Public Health, Durham County Council, Gill O'Neill was the Vice-Chair of the DASVEG and that a lot of work was being undertaken in terms of performance which may be of interest to the Committee. The Chair thanked the Criminal Justice Programme Lead and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor A Shield asked if the ease of access to pornography had led to an increase in the risk of sexual violence, and what was the risk and impact. The Criminal Justice Programme Lead reiterated that it was felt that the DASVEG had not focussed on the sexual violence element and that this would be looked at.

Councillor G Huntington asked as regards early intervention and links to mental health issues of those involved and young people within families. The Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted that Operation Encompass included elements such as an alert to schools where a parent was arrested for a domestic violence offence, with the extension as previously mentioned following the JTAI recommendations.

Councillor H Liddle noted the work to encourage victims to come forward and asked as regards public awareness and being able to break down a culture of "behind closed doors". The Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted that there had been the recent "No less of a Man" campaign and a number of national campaigns, including leaflets, posters and advertisements on the sides of buses. She explained that was a lot of information available at pharmacies, GP surgeries and hospitals. It was noted it was important to be able to get the message across early through education, with services such as One-Point. Councillor H Liddle asked as regards points of contact, the Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted that there was: the Police, the Victim, Care and Advice Services (VCAS); and Harbour.

Councillor R Crute asked how issues could be reported and how referrals made could be trusted, given some recent national cases, to ensure confidence in the systems so victims would come forward. He also asked as regards the NPS and DTVCRC, with potential changes for those organisations and how this would affect the work as mentioned. The Criminal Justice Programme Lead agreed that victims have to have confidence in the criminal justice system and noted the service provider as mentioned. She added that all involved were aware of changes to the NPS and CRCs that would be taken place, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted this was picked up within the Committee's work programme.

The Chair noted as regards Harbour and asked if, given the number of organisations involved, was there a “silo mentality” or duplication of work. He also asked if there was a direction of travel in terms of the number of domestic abuse and sexual violence incidents and comparisons to other Force areas. The Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted that Harbour were jointly commissioned by the PCVC and the Council, and this helped to prevent duplication and noted a domestic abuse helpline, linking to all the appropriate services.

It was explained that domestic violence was increasing, and a performance framework was being developed. The Criminal Justice Programme Lead noted she could bring this information back to Committee at a future date and that comparative figures were difficult and national guidance would help in benchmarking and understanding performance.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That a progress report on activity of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group that includes performance information be included within the Committee’s work programme.

9 Quarter Four 2018/19 Performance Management Report

The Chair introduced the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager, Tom Gorman who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter Four 2018/19 Performance Management Report for the Altogether Safer theme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager referred Members to the report, with the key performance indicators (KPIs) being set out against the key performance questions (KPQs): how effective are we at tackling crime and disorder; how effective are we at tackling anti-social behaviour; how well do we reduce misuse of drugs and alcohol; how well do we tackle abuse of vulnerable people, including domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation; and how do we keep our environment safe, including roads and waterways.

It was noted that the key performance issues in terms of crime and disorder, with an increase in the total crime rate of eight percent, reminding Members of the workshop session on Recorded Crime that had taken place, led by Chief Superintendent A Green. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager noted that the increase could comprise of three elements: as a consequence of national changes in recording; victims of crime having an increased confidence in reporting; and an actual increase in the number of incidents. He added that for County Durham, there had been an increase in violence against the person, without injury. It was noted this harassment had previously been categorised as anti-social behaviour (ASB), now being recorded as crime.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager explained that there had been an increase in the number of theft offences, including shoplifting, with this being an issue identified within the Committee's work programme. He added that there had been an increase in metal theft, with Members asked to recall the work undertaken by a Working Group of the Committee in 2012.

He noted that domestic violence had increased, and while an element could be increased confidence in reporting, it would be useful to drill down into the issue, with the Criminal Justice Programme Lead having noted that she could come back to Committee with further information relating to performance.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager reminded Members of the Crime Survey undertaken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), measuring how well respondents thought the Council and Police were dealing with ASB and crime in the local area. It was noted that this had reduced from 61.3 percent to 50.3 percent when compared to the previous year. Members noted that the similar measure, the Police alone tackling crime and ASB, showed a very high confidence in their activities.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager noted that in terms of drug offences, these remained relatively low, though with an increase of 14 percent, with possession offences showing the greatest increase over the longer term.

Members noted that in relation to the Drug and Alcohol Service there had been increasing levels of performance, with two of the three targets now being met. It was explained that the one target not being met was the percentage of successful completions of drug treatment for opiate users. It was noted that in terms of opioid prescriptions, the North East had the highest rates in the country, even after accounting for factors such as age and deprivation. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager noted he had asked Public Health to speak to Members as regards the prescription issue when next at Committee.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager concluded by noting that in relation to road safety statistics, there was an overall decreasing trend in terms of fatalities.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor R Crute noted the statistic relating to hate crime as set out on page 54 of the report, an increase of a quarter over the last four years. He asked if this was a case of more confidence in reporting, or whether there was a genuine increase in these crimes. He noted that paragraph 13 of the report set out information as regards a six-month pilot as regards twice weekly MARACs and asked if the result of this could be reported back to Committee as regards its impact.

The Chair noted anecdotal evidence of an increase in Class A drugs, with many more incidents being reported adding he felt it was an issue that needed to be tackled. Councillor E Mavin agreed with the Chair, noting it appeared to be far too easy for people to be able to get hold of such drugs. The Chair added he felt this perceived increase could be an element in terms of the increase in drug related ASB. Councillor B Avery noted he agreed with the Chair and Councillor E Mavin and had raised the issue at local Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings.

The Chair noted that certain types of reoffending were increasing and noted while some out of court disposals and programmes, such as Checkpoint, worked with some individuals, there was a cohort of hardcore offenders. He added that being able to tackle those individuals was a great concern to Councillors as community leaders.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Review of the Committee's Work Programme

The Chair asked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to speak to Members in relation to the Review of the Committee's Work Programme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that the report followed on from the report presented at the March meeting of the Committee and set out the 2019/20 Work Programme. He highlighted the work that had been undertaken by the Committee within the past year, including on Arson and Cybercrime, and the ongoing work in terms of looking at the Council and SDP plans.

It was explained that the special meeting set out in the draft work programme for 26 July 2019 was cancelled and that the Draft SDP Plan and Modern-Day Slavery items would be considered at future meetings.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted some areas for development were set out at page 73 of the agenda papers, highlighting potential reviews and focussed sessions on issues including: shoplifting; confidence in the Police and Council tackling crime and ASB; and the CDDFRS Integrated Risk Management Plan. He noted the ongoing reviews in terms of the Road Safety Strategy and the joint review with Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Children's Residential Care Homes.

The Chair thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer and asked Members if they agreed the proposed work programme for the Committee as set out at Appendix Two of the report. He noted that of course the Committee would be flexible, in order to be able to look and any issues that may arise.

Resolved:

That the Work Programme for the Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2019/20 be agreed.

Councillor A Shield left the meeting at 10.56am

11 Overview and Scrutiny Review Updates

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that the initial meeting of the Road Safety Strategy Working Group had taken place on 1 May 2019, with further meetings to be scheduled in due course. He noted that the next meeting would look at statistics and there would also be opportunities for field study activities. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that Co-opted Member, Mr D Balls had taken part in some field study activities and would give a brief update to the Committee.

Mr D Balls thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer for arranging the visits and noted he had attended three different locations: a primary school; a secondary school; and the Learning Curve at Spennymoor.

He explained that while visiting Framwellgate Primary School he was able to witness the modern equivalent of the old "cycling proficiency", with children in groups of six learning as regards correct safety equipment, such as helmets, and in relation to carrying out checks on their bicycles before use. He noted it was a greater number of checks than the average driver would carry out before using their car. Mr D Balls noted the children then went out and, while the roads were busy, the young people performed very well.

Mr D Balls noted that the second event was a Safety Carousel at Seaham, and he had been amazed at the quality of the presentations and noted that all the activities had been very well received and engaging, especially those from the Fire Service.

Mr D Balls noted the third visit was to Learning Curve at Spennymoor with a number of apprentices aged 18-20 years old. He explained that the presentations on road safety were at the level for those young people, a little more graphic, designed to impact. He added that there was an interactive presentation utilising 3D goggles, which put you in a car with four young people. He noted the simulation was a car travelling too fast, with the driver showing off and that the vehicle crashes with a passenger being thrown through the windscreen. Mr D Balls added here was a helicopter and the Fire Service demonstrated how they would extricate a person who was trapped in a vehicle. He noted that there were demonstrations in terms of the impact of the use of seat belts and noted that all of the visits and presentations had been very worthwhile.

The Chair thanked Mr D Balls for his feedback on the field study activities.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that review activity on Children's Residential Care Homes had completed its evidence gathering stage and were preparing its draft report.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

12 Police and Crime Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update report in respect of the Police and Crime Panel (PCP), noting the meeting on 6 June was a confirmation hearing for the new Chief Constable, Jo Farrell, the former Deputy Chief Constable.

He added that the next meeting of the PCP was the Annual General Meeting and would take place on 28 June, with items on the agenda including the Annual Report of the PCVC and quarterly performance report with the Committee to be updated at its next meeting.

Resolved: The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update report in respect of the Police and Crime Panel (PCP), noting the meeting on 6 June was a confirmation hearing for the new Chief Constable, Jo Farrell, the former Deputy Chief Constable.

He added that the next meeting of the PCP was the Annual General Meeting and would take place on 28 June, with items on the agenda including the Annual Report of the PCVC and quarterly performance report with the Committee to be updated at its next meeting.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.