

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 County Hall, Durham on **Friday 20 September 2019 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Batey, R Crute, C Hampson, S Iveson, B Kellett, H Liddle, J Stephenson, D Stoker, K Thompson and J Turnbull

Also Present:

Councillor L Hovvels

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bainbridge, J Charlton, G Huntington, L Kennedy, E Mavin, Mr D Balls, Mr A J Cooke, Chief Fire Officer S Errington and Chief Superintendent A Green

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitutes in attendance.

3 Minutes of the Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Committee congratulated David Orford, the new Deputy Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer informed the group that a response regarding the report on arson and deliberate secondary fires within the east Durham area had been sent to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services and the Chair of the Safe Durham Partnership Board. The response would be considered at the next Partnership Board.

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.

The articles included: "Student film highlights consequences of cybercrime" relating to the launch of a short film by students at New College Durham following a recommendation from the Committee's Scrutiny Review on the potential consequences of hacking and dangers of cybercrime to young people. Once the film had finished production it would be shown at a future meeting.

Another article was: "Consultation launched on licensing in Durham City" relating to the consultation being undertaken of a cumulative licensing policy in Durham City that links to item 7 on the agenda - Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Strategy Group update presented by the Public Health Strategic Manager.

Resolved

That the presentation be noted.

7 Open Water Safety and City Safety Group

The Chair introduced the Occupation Health and Safety Manager who delivered an overview presentation providing an update of the partnership work on open water safety within County Durham and activity of the City Safety Group (for copy see file of minutes).

The Committee were informed of joint work that had been carried out by the Safe Durham Partnership, Durham City Safety Group and the County Durham Open Water Safety Group to promote water safety across the County. The presentation provided information on drowning incidents in both open waters and inland waters. Information highlighted that nationally this was predominantly a male dominated issue. Figures also showed that there had been a reduction in the number of fatal incidents with individuals who had alcohol or drugs in their system.

The Occupational Health and Safety Manager advised that the largest grouping of people losing their lives were those who had no intention of going into the water at all. Within the last 12 months there had been one fatality in the Durham City area and two outside of the City Centre.

Members were informed that there had been several proactive initiatives/campaigns carried out in 2018/19 including 'Don't drink and drown' and the 'Cold water shock awareness' campaign.

In addition, links had also been made with the Best Bar None initiative through the Durham City Centre Manager to promote the risks of drinking and drowning via social media, Twitter and Facebook.

In addition, Durham Constabulary and Durham County Council had carried out two weeks of activities including the designing of wraps for phone boxes to create a visual campaign to target teenagers and their parents.

The Committee was informed that the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) had been commissioned to undertake an independent review of new building developments in Durham City, with work undertaken with Site Managers and Developers around safety measures of building works being carried out near the river.

It was confirmed that Durham County Council investigated any concerns that were highlighted from members of the public and assessments were carried out on potentially dangerous areas, sometimes with the Public Rights of Way Officers to ensure all measures of safety and controls were put in place. This could involve working with private land owners as it was their responsibility to ensure public safety on their land. It was highlighted that work was continuous in assessing areas where there was high foot fall to ensure there were no risks. An example of this was where extra fencing was installed near the rowing club in time for the Durham Regatta event.

The Committee was advised that another campaign re-launched this year was 'Dying to be cool'. This used various ways of promotion including cinema advertising, adverts at bus stops and Durham County News which was sent out to all residents in County Durham. Work was underway to look at plans for education and awareness for next year.

The campaign was in its fourth year and was delivered to schools in June and July in the lead up to the 6 weeks holidays. Fiona Gosling who lost her son to drowning fronted the campaign which was a huge success as 2,500+ pupils had now received the message.

Members were informed that partnership working with Northumbrian Water was to be strengthened to reduce risks and that campaigns/initiatives were continually being monitored to see where things could be improved. The Occupational Health and Safety Manager advised Members that information from fatal incidents was provided to the Public Health Team as they have a key role in reducing the number of suicides.

The Chair thanked the Occupation Health and Safety Manager and noted the good work that was taking place around water safety. He asked Members of the Committee for their comments and questions.

Councillor J Turnbull commented that communities outside of the Durham City area had to raise their own funding to replace fencing along the river where it was believed to be dangerous and gave the example of Daisy Lane at Langley Moor. The local community had found it difficult to raise £3,000 to erect fencing in order to provide a safe environment for children who use the route as they walked to school.

The Occupation Health and Safety Manager noted Councillor J Turnbull's comments and agreed to investigate the safety aspects of this area. He stressed that there were issues with any safety investigations that involved land that did not belong to Durham County Council as it was difficult to identify land owners in order to make areas safe.

Councillor D Stoker raised the same issue with an area in Durham along the stretch of river near the Honest Lawyer Pub which was well used by dog walkers and pedestrians. To date there had been no fund raising for this stretch of water to erect/repair any safety fencing and highlighted there was a steep drop that was a cause for concern.

The Occupation Health and Safety Manager agreed to investigate this stretch of water for any safety breaches. He noted that sometimes fencing was not always the best way to address water safety issues.

Councillor D Stoker informed the Committee that there may also be safety issues at Low Burnhall, Durham which was again heavily used by dog walkers. In this area the water was very fast flowing. The Occupation Health and Safety Manager agreed to look at this area and would check if there had been any fatalities.

Resolved

That the report and presentation be noted.

That a progress report on Open Water Safety and the City Safety Group be included in the Committee's work programme.

8 Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Strategy Group Update 2018/19

The Chair introduced the Public Health Strategic Manager who was in attendance to update the Committee on the Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction Group (ADHRG) and report on the work that the range of Partners who were engaged in the Group aim to carry out to reduce alcohol and drug misuse related harm (for copy see file of minutes).

The Committee was informed that the ADHRG plan had been developed and implemented under the governance of the Safe Durham Partnership. The group brought together stakeholders engaged in alcohol and drug harm reduction to oversee the implementation of actions.

The Public Health Manager drew the Committees attention to appendix two of the report showing the ADHRG plan on a page that highlighted the vision and objectives of the group. The plan on a page had helped develop the associated action plan that was to be reported to the Drug and Alcohol Strategy Group on 23 September 2019.

The Public Health Manager updated the Committee on the wider programme of Partnership working and commended that the Alcohol CLear (Challenge services, Leadership and Results) was an evidence-based approach that Partnerships could use to see how local systems and services were doing in reducing alcohol related harm. It was confirmed that the Public Health Team had been approached by Alcohol CLear to be a pilot project, the results of which had helped develop the plan.

Members were advised that there was a reduction in alcohol seizures from children and young people by the police and if children and young people were caught in possession of alcohol, a vulnerable children's form would be completed that could track children back to their families in order to offer support around the dangers of alcohol.

In addition, an alcohol licensing consultation was underway looking at special policies around several licensed premises in Durham along with the associated crime and what impact this had on the bars. The consultation deadline would run to November 2019 to enable students to participate and it was confirmed FRESH had been procured for another year to continue their work across the region.

The Public Health Strategic Manager highlighted that the 'alcohol free children' campaign had been successful to which had attracted a lot of media coverage aimed at targeting parents alerting them to the dangers of allowing children to have alcohol.

Members were advised that the North East Alcohol Office, Balance had carried out work with Sheffield University around the Minimum Unit Price (MUP) for alcohol. They continue to lobby Government and MP's to introduce a 50p MUP for alcohol in England. Research carried out showed that the North East would benefit from this. They had also launched a campaign called 'spot of lunch' which looked at links between the consumption of alcohol and cancer.

In addition, Naloxone kits had been rolled out with the police in custody suites as a way of reversing the effects of opiate overdoses. So far 90 kits had been given out to service users, family members, carers and other key stakeholders.

It was confirmed that Human Kind had their contract renewed with Durham County Council to offer along with Spectrum clinical and medical services around drug and alcohol misuse. The Public Health Team and Partners were exploring ways to develop the Women's recovery Centre Durham (WRAD) including its location in order to address the current gap in provision.

A holistic Health Needs Assessment (HNA) for long term opiate users had been undertaken to consider the requirements and to oversee the work. There were five areas for commissioning to be considered – the review of treatment options, extending mental health provision, increased engagement with primary care regarding long terms conditions, Bespoke women’s services including WRAD and the potential for the provision for Heroin Assisted Treatment (HAT). A bid was submitted to Housing Solutions to employ two Mental Health workers. Although unsuccessful further options would be pursued via Right Place, Right Carer programme.

The Chair thanked the Public Health Strategic Manager and noted the good work that was taking place around Alcohol and Drug Harm Reduction in the County. He asked Members of the Committee for their comments and questions.

Councillor H Liddle asked for clarification in relation to the referral process for young people under the influence of drugs and alcohol, if the police were involved and commented that the trend at present in young people appears to be consuming drugs via large water bottles used as bongos with alcohol becoming less affordable.

The Public Health Strategic Manager informed the group that the natural trend in alcohol in young people was going down. If police were alerted to either a young person or a group of young people under the influence, there were several ways this could be handled. Advice could be given at the scene to that young person/people or their parents could be contacted alerting them to the dangers of alcohol in children. Alternatively, the school could be contacted where larger groups of young people were involved.

Councillor D Boyes asked what could be done in schools. The Public Health Strategic Manager informed the group that work carried out in schools was dependent on what the school themselves would allow. Drug and alcohol harm could be addressed in assemblies or within classrooms. There were various packages open to schools including the attendance of the Police.

Councillor D Stoker was concerned with issues in the market place in Durham City over the last six-month period with people under the influence. Some of these people were presenting as homeless and begging for money in an aggressive manner. He informed the Committee that he had received a phone call from an elderly person from Tynemouth expressing how appalled they had been when visiting Durham City recently. Councillor D Stoker commented that he felt there was a limited response from the police to this situation with no one else taking responsibility for the matter and asked what was happening to moderate the situation.

Councillor L Hovvels informed the Committee that the issue had been raised on several occasions. Durham City Parish Council had called a conference that would be held on 31 October 2019 to address the situation with joint working between the police and Housing Solutions as this was a multi-agency problem that needed addressing.

The Public Health Strategic Manager also re-iterated that people were aware of the situation and work was on going to try to address the situation within the Safer Durham Partnership. Tourists and students visiting the market place perceive these people to be homeless but in a lot of cases they were not. The Drug and Alcohol outreach workers visit the area to offer help to those who genuinely need it but there was a small group of people that refuse any help.

Councillor D Stoker needed to know why these people could not be banned from the area. The Public Health Strategic Manager informed the group that this discussion would need to be taken up with the police. Councillor D Boyes informed the group to await the outcome of the conference which should be kept on the agenda of this Committee.

Councillor J Turnbull asked for clarification as to whether the Licensing consultation covered supermarkets selling alcohol in the early mornings and commented that people were travelling to Durham to beg for money and would then purchase alcohol. The Public Health Strategic Manager agreed to check with a colleague on what the Licensing consultation included and acknowledged that the begging behaviour was becoming an issue and advise was being provided to students to not give away money of which may discourage those begging from coming back.

Councillor D Stoker asked if supermarkets were given advice over the sale of alcohol for 24 hours and who they should sell it to. The Public Health Strategic Manager informed the group that work had been carried out over an 18-month period with Gateshead Council around options for licensing registration. There was not a lot of room to negotiate with supermarkets over the selling of alcohol. Advice and recommendations were given to supermarkets but it was up to the supermarkets as to whether they implemented the recommendations. The Public Health Strategic Manager informed Members that the Public Health Team were consulted on changes to licences and this had resulted in a garage in Plawsworth not increasing their license to 24 hours.

Councillor D Boyes asked about opioids such as Fentanyl being prescribed by GP's and whether the Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) are monitored and challenged if we thought that the levels being prescribed were excessive. The Public Health Strategic Manager informed the group that rates were coming down and partnership working with CCGs, training packages for GPs were available.

With regards to the roll out of Naloxone kits, Councillor K Thompson asked if they were restricted due to budgets or whether Councillors could use their Small Grant funding to pay for further kits to help the service.

The Public Health Strategic Manager informed the group that training is required in the use of the kits and at present the kits were funded through Public Health and were currently being used by the police.

Councillor R Crute asked whether there were any contingency plans if the funding/budget came to an end for this work and if this work could be sustained. The Public Health Strategic Manager informed the group that there was Public Health funding for another year. The contract was continually being reviewed however drug and alcohol recovery and treatment services was a mandatory service for the Council to provide.

Resolved

- I. That the report be noted; and
- II. That the update on the actions associated with the ADHRG plan be noted

9 Quarter One 2019/20 Performance Management Report

The Chair introduced the Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager, who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter one 2019/20 Performance Management Report for the Altogether Safe theme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager referred Members to the report, with the key performance indicators (KPIs) being set out against the key performance questions (KPQs). As with previous reports the structure had remained the same looking at: 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 in terms of crime and disorder levels had stabilised for the first time. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager referred to a workshop on recorded crime led by Chief Superintendent Adrian Green where it was noted that the way in which crime was recorded within the police had changed and had led to an increase in the number of reported crimes. The Committee were advised that Durham Constabulary had been rated as 'good' for crime reporting following an inspection by HMICFRS.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager advised that within the frequency of crime categories, violence against a person was the most frequently recorded. Theft was the second most frequently reported with shop lifting numbers increasing and was included in the committee's future work programme. The Committee was informed of information in relation to the recordings of crime types – possession of weapons accounts for less than one percent, although it is increasing and anti-social behaviour (ASB) had been broken down in to those reported to Durham Constabulary and those reported to Durham County Council, with levels being reported to the two being similar.

The Committee were informed that both alcohol related violent crime and alcohol related domestic violence had increased and the successful completion of treatment targets via Human Kind were being met for alcohol but had not been met for Opiate users. In addition, there had been an increase in the number of reports of drug paraphernalia finds including needles.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager noted that within vulnerable people section of the report, domestic violence was the largest category to which from analysis of data reported that numbers had decreased making them the lowest for two years. In addition, Members were advised that there had also been a reduction in the number of child sexual exploitation referrals.

The Committee were advised that the statistics for road safety collisions was a long-term trend but was coming down and that six additional 20mph sites have been identified within the County. In addition, there had been a decrease in deliberate fires in the East of the County through targeted Partnership working.

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

Councillor R Crute requested clarity as violent crime had reduced but in the narrative on page 47 of the report violent crime was on the rise. He asked if this was due to the increase in alcohol consumption. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager informed the Committee that both violence against the person and alcohol related violent crime had decreased.

Councillor D Boyes sought clarification if other police forces were at the same level for as Durham Constabulary for recording crime and also about youth crime. The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager informed the group that all 43 police forces have now undergone a crime integrity inspection by HMICFRS enabling greater comparisons and this showed Durham Constabulary in a positive position with a good rating.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager informed the group that youth offending within Youth Justice Plan would be looked at within the Committee's work programme.

Councillor C Hampson commented on some motorists who did not adhere to the 20mph zones and double yellow lines outside a school in her area and provided an example where the school crossing patrol had felt intimidated following speaking to a motorist who had parked on double yellow lines. Councillor C Hampson added that the number of PCSO's in her area had been cut making it harder to monitor. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer agreed to follow up the query in relation to 20mph zones and parking with the appropriate officer within Durham County Council.

Councillor D Stoker commented to Members that 20mph zones outside schools were advisory, not mandatory and down to motorist's good will to adhere to them.

Councillor C Hampson reported to the Committee that a flashing speed visor within her area was obstructed by over grown trees and had been reported to the Council on numerous occasions with no action taken place. Councillor C Hampson added that she felt that consideration to prevent any potential obstructions should be given to the location of future such speed visors. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer agreed to report the obstruction due to the overgrown trees to the appropriate Officer within Durham County Council.

Councillor D Stoker informed the group that motorists may be under the misconception that they would not get fined if they drove over 20mph and queried if County Councils could use their powers to fine motorists.

Councillor D Boyes reiterated the fact that 20mph flashing zones outside schools were advisory and not mandatory but motorists could be stopped by the police if they considered the driver to be driving dangerously. However, red circled 20mph road signs indicating a fixed 20mph speed zone were enforceable. Councillor D Boyes added that the Council could investigate the possibility of making these areas fixed 20mph zones outside schools and that these concerns were considered within the Committee's work on 20mph zones.

Councillor B Kellett said that he believed that 20mph zones would generally be inappropriate for schools as they would require drivers to adhere to this speed limit all the time which he thought was unnecessary apart from mornings and afternoons on school days when school children were crossing roads.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

10 Overview and Scrutiny Review Update

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer updated Members on the review of activity of the Committee. The Committee had set up a working group to develop a County Durham Road Safety Strategy. The working group's next meeting was scheduled for 10 October 2019 and would focus on regional statistics and partnership Road Safety education to contribute to development of a road safety strategy.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer updated Members that the joint working group with Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Children's Residential Care Homes was in its final stages with the production of a draft report.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

11 Police and Crime Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update with regards to the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) Annual General Meeting that took place on 28 June 2019. The Committee were advised that the agenda included the election of the Chair and Vice Chair for the forthcoming year, the Quarterly Report and outcomes of the HMICFRS Inspection Integrated Performance Assessment report.

The Committee were advised that a special PCP meeting was to take place on 20 September 2019 that was to consider a request from the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner Mr Ron Hogg to consider appointing an acting PCVC.

The Committee wished to pass on their best wishes to Mr Hogg.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.