

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 **Thursday 9 January 2020 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Avery, A Bainbridge, A Batey, R Crute, C Hampson, B Kellett, H Liddle, J Maitland, A Shield (substitute for J Charlton) and J Turnbull

Co-opted Members:

Mr D Balls and Mr A J Cooke

Co-opted Employees/Officers:

Chief Fire Officer S Errington and Chief Superintendent A Green

Also Present:

Councillors L Hovvels and L Maddison

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Charlton, D Hall, G Huntington, S Iveson, E Mavin, J Stephenson, K Thompson and C Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor A Shield substituted for Councillor J Charlton.

3 Minutes of the Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair wished to pay tribute to Ron Hogg, Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner for Durham who died in December 2019. Ron had previously attended the committee and had been very supportive to our work. The Chair added that during his time in office he had accomplished many achievements and would be a huge loss to County Durham.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that in relation to item 7, Anti-Social Behaviour would be an area to be considered within the Committee's future work programme.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that in relation to item 8 of the minutes, the 'Councillors guide to tackling modern slavery' had been circulated to members. He added that in respect to item 10 the Police, Crime and Victims Commissioners Quarterly Performance report had also been circulated.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any

Councillors Avery, Batey and Turnbull declared an interest in agenda item 7 as they were 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 referred members to the recent prominent articles and news stories relating to the remit of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Articles included "Operation Bellflower targets anti-social behaviour" that related to a multi-agency investigation that involved Durham Constabulary, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) and Believe Housing into Anti-Social Behaviour and vehicle nuisance. The joint operation resulted in several arrests made for a range of alleged offences, vehicles seized that were stolen or suspected of being stolen, estate walkabouts and home fire safety checks being carried out by CDDFRS staff. The article was related to item 7 on the Committee's agenda that would be presented by the Chief Fire Officer, (CDDFRS).

The second article was "Durham and Cleveland police target drink and drug driving over Christmas" that related to the annual winter drink and drug driving campaign ran by the National Police Chief's Council on the lead up to Christmas. The campaign involved Officers from Cleveland and Durham Specialist Operations Unit and the Special Constabulary who carried out a massive screening of breath and drug tests at the roadside to catch dangerous drivers. The article was related to the Committee's work around road safety to reduce road casualties in County Durham and item 8 on the Committee's agenda that would be presented by the Strategic Manager, Adults and Health Services.

Resolved

That the presentation be noted.

7 County Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Three Year Consultation

The Chair introduced the Chief Fire Officer (CDDFRS) who was in attendance to provide the Committee with a presentation on the CDDFRS Integrated Risk Management Plan three-year consultation (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer explained that producing an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) was a statutory duty of the Fire and Rescue Authority that looked at the key risks within the fire authority and how the authority dealt with them. This linked into the national framework that was published in 2012 which set out the Governments priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities who must have regard to the framework whilst they carried out their duties. The IRMP collated information within Durham and Darlington that aimed to keep the areas safe.

Members were referred to information within the report relating to a consultation on the three-year IRMP and priority areas for 2020/21 and that the consultation period ended on the 6 March 2020. The views of the public, staff and members of the committee were required to ensure the IRMP considered how changes impacted on people within communities. The presentation highlighted activity within the fire authority with proposals within the consultation that were scheduled to be implemented over the next twelve months. The Chief Fire Officer noted that government funding had been cut in previous years and there was apprehension for the longer-term settlement for beyond 2020/21 for the authority that may affect changes in the future.

The Chief Fire Officer informed the committee that although national response standards were removed in 2004, CDDFRS had decided to keep retain these standards to ensure that issues during austerity were not masked. He highlighted that the fire authority was confident that the predictions made in relation to risk were on target and although targets looked like they had declined they were still being maintained comfortably. The Chief Fire Officer added that four out of six targets were met successfully but the Authority struggled with non-domestic fires and issues remained around arson especially in the Easington area. The Chief Fire Officer noted the Committee's work on arson and great work that had continued to reduce deliberate fires.

The Chief Fire Officer continued to demonstrate the hard work by the fire authority and gave an example of the fire stoppers initiative that had started as a trial within the Easington area but had now been rolled out to the North East and is based on crime stoppers model. He noted that work had been undertaken with the Phoenix project that educated young people on the dangers of arson. In addition, safe and wellbeing visits had been completed with fire crews visiting residents to advise them on a wide range of risks within the home.

The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged that this had impacted on other organisations like winter warm, smoking and alcoholism teams. He informed the Committee that 80% of visits had been targeted to people in high risk areas and those identified within vulnerable groups. The visits had been supported by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) as they had helped reduce domestic fires.

The Chief Fire Officer drew the committee's attention to information on the growing number of false alarms that the service was attending. The committee were advised on the definitions of false alarms. The Chief Fire Officer informed members that malicious false alarms had reduced significantly in the past 10 years but service was experiencing an increase in unwanted fire signals where automatic fire alarms had activated due to a mechanical or electrical fault or by false activation by non-fire conditions.

The Chief Fire Officer informed the Committee that the authority had commenced a trial to introduce a charging system for businesses for unwanted fire signals. The system allowed for two free unwanted fire signals but the third would warrant a charge. The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that businesses were sent a letter after both the first and second signals, advising them to changes and provided a warning of a potential charge if they had a third false alarm. He noted there had been a good response to the scheme from businesses who had engaged well with the fire authority. He advised that businesses were supported by the fire authority and guided on how to do things differently to prevent unwanted fire signals. He highlighted that this was not meant as a money-making scheme but as preventative measure to make businesses change the way they worked. He added that it was proposed that the scheme would become permanent from 1 April 2020.

The Chief Fire Officer concluded by notifying members of the committee that there were numerous ways to respond to the consultation via twitter, face book and consultation events. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer agreed to circulate information, dates and locations of the consultation events.

The Chair thanked the Chief Fire Officer (CDDFRS) for his presentation and asked members of the committee to provide comments on each of the questions that were contained in the consultation prior to a formal response being submitted from the Committee.

Question 1: Do you have any comments or suggested amendments to our three-year Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) document?

The Committee Members supported the three-year IRMP and had no comments or suggested amendments to the plan.

Question 2: Following our trial, do you support our proposal to implement the crewing arrangements at Durham and Spennymoor on a permanent basis from April 2020?

Question 3: Following our trial, do you support our proposal to implement the day crewing arrangements at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe on a permanent basis from April 2020?

Councillor Liddle enquired with the additional appliance at Durham Station, what impact and level of savings had been achieved from the trial.

The Chief Fire Officer informed the committee that to implement option three there would be a £450,000 saving and resources were allocated based on risk and demand profiles. The inclusion of the Target Response Vehicle had a resource implication of £150,000 but was of high value and beneficial in that it responded to approximately 60% of calls from Durham Station and enabled the fire engine at the station to be available for life saving emergencies.

In response to Councillors Crute's question relating to what comments had been made from Trade Unions and the public in relation to operating option 3, the Chief Fire Officer informed the committee that there had been 52% support in favour of trialling option three but the Fire Brigade Union were opposed to any reductions in staff and appliances. He added that staff from Durham Fire Station had not liked the proposed option and following consideration of their feedback, led to a change of the additional vehicle at Durham Station.

Councillor Crute was concerned that if the model became permanent nothing could be altered if circumstances changed that could potentially put staff at risk.

The Chief Fire Officer stated that the IRMP was reviewed every year to ensure risks were managed appropriately. In addition, the service's Emergency Response review constantly monitored demand in line with risk and available funding. He noted that if there were any significant changes the plan was flexible to adapt to the new circumstances that were presented to ensure resources were in the right place at the right time. He notified the committee that over the last ten years there had been a steady state of incidents that occurred in the same places that ensured resources were allocated appropriately. The trial would be permanent but would be open to review if there was a change to risk and funding.

Councillor Shield asked if the IRMP linked into the County Durham Plan and whether it was considered when reviewing the IRMP.

The Chief Fire Officer notified the Committee that engagement took place with both the Council and Darlington Borough Council for the County Durham Plan and the Darlington Borough Local Plan were considered when reviewing the IRMP. The Fire Authority were informed of any new housing or business developments to ensure they were factored into response standards.

Councillor Maddison required to know how far the Fire Authority was consulted with when there were changes to the County Durham Plan or if it was amended and how that affected the IRMP.

The Chief Fire Officer informed the Committee that all developments within the County Plan at present were factored into the IRMP. He explained that the Fire Authority were only consulted if there were significant changes with the County Plan. He gave an example of if a new town was developed that had no fire station they would be heavily consulted with as it would influence response standards that would require urgent changes to take place in the IRMP but if a housing development reduced or expanded by ten houses they would not be expected to be consulted.

He noted that developments in certain areas would also constitute consultation. He gave the example of consultation being required if changes were made in areas with deprivation like Easington as this would be classed as a high-risk area but would not be required if changes were made in affluent areas like Consett. However, he highlighted that any slight changes made relating to business developments the Fire Authority would need to be consulted with due to the fire safety implications of the buildings.

The committee agreed unanimously to support the proposed trial to implement the crewing arrangements at Durham and Spennymoor and also at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe on a permanent basis from April 2020.

Question 4: We have maintained our response standards based on our historical approach to responding to incidents. Do you support our approach to maintain these standards or do you think we should carry out a review?

Mr Balls commented that he felt there was a risk that reviewing or reducing historical standards may make them easier to maintain.

Councillor Boyes explained that the Fire Authority had kept standards in the IRMP that were not required to and to maintain standards during a period of austerity was a challenge to ensure nothing was missed.

The Committee gave general support to the approach to maintain standards.

Question 5: Given the increase in arson that we have experienced over the last few years do you support our intention to reallocate some resources into arson reduction initiatives?

Councillor Shield noted that prevention should be the way forward with regard to arson. He added that young people should be engaged with as much as possible and highlighted the consequences and dangers of arson. Councillor Shield felt that the work should continue through existing mechanisms.

Councillor Boyes commented on work undertaken by the Committee on arson and reiterated Councillor Shield's comment and that the work undertaken by the service on activity including the Phoenix initiative was commendable and had reduced the number of arson incidents. He felt that it worked well and should continue.

The committee unanimously supported the intention to reallocate some resources into arson reduction initiatives.

Question 6: Do you support our approach to continue to focus our safe and wellbeing visits on those people who are at greatest risk from fire?

Councillor Liddle wanted to know what the response was to residents when home visits were carried out.

The Chief Fire Officer highlighted that statistics showed that the safe and wellbeing visits had reduced dwelling fires. In addition, the initiative and data collected from the home visits had been reviewed by the Safer and stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny and an independent evaluation by Teesside University. He informed the committee recommendations from this work had been implemented and technology for crews on appliances for data could be collected electronically while they were at the property which was then shared with other agencies in prevention work.

Councillor Bainbridge asked if safe and wellbeing visits were undertaken by other Fire Authorities and if there were any comparisons.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that a vast amount of other Fire Authorities also carried out safe and wellbeing visits but it was envisaged that they would not be the same as Durham and Darlington. The approach in County Durham and Darlington was very comprehensive compared to other areas. The visits were an additional task staff performed on top of their day to day job.

Councillor Turnbull informed the group that he had previously observed home visits with the Fire Authority and commented on how open and honest residents were with Fire Officers. He felt the visits were vital and should be continued.

Councillor Boyes reiterated Councillor Turnbull's comments to the fantastic response from residents following the visits.

Mr Cooke informed the committee that he personally had experienced a home visit. Fire officers had installed two carbon monoxide alarms in his home and stressed that if he had any questions or problems to contact them. Mr Balls also confirmed that he had personally experienced a home visit and commented that most of the public were surprised that these visits and the equipment the fire service installed were free.

Councillor Liddle notified the committee that a members seminar had been held on wellbeing visits that illustrated how visits were carried out and how the questions were asked of residents. She said the seminar had been very beneficial and informative and that attendees had the opportunity to input into the design of the questionnaire and development of the model.

The Committee gave support to the approach to continue to focus the safe and wellbeing visits on those people who were the greatest risk of fire.

Question 7: Following our trial, do you support our proposal to introduce a charging system for certain businesses when we attend multiple unwanted fire signals to their premises?

Councillor Crute asked if this had been undertaken within other areas but raised concern to a risk that if a business was on a second warning for an unwanted fire signal, they may be apprehensive to call for a third time in fear of being charged.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the scheme had already been successfully established in Northumberland and other authorities. He informed the committee that fire signals were made through automatic systems and not through a person pushing a button resulting in some unwanted fire signals being made due to faulty equipment. He felt the charging system supported businesses rather than it being a money-making scheme. He used Durham University as an example of an organisation who had numerous unwanted fire signals but the Fire Authority had worked with them to overcome the issue by adding a five-minute delay to the system to give a member of staff the time to do checks before an unwarranted signal could be processed.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that there were exemptions where delays to the system would not be beneficial like with Durham Cathedral which was a building of historical significance where any delay could be catastrophic. The Fire Authority had also worked with Frankland prison as another example of an organisation that had several unwanted fire signals. It was found that the prison had numerous systems that made unwanted fire signals. The Chief Fire Officer advised that through joint working the charge would only be enforced if there were three unwanted fire signals from just one system. He noted that there were concerns with some organisations in the private sector who had been informed they had faulty detector heads but chose not to change them as it would be too costly for them. He perceived that they could find themselves being charged.

Councillor Crute was assured that the charging was a positive system and was supportive of the proposal.

Councillor Maitland asked how the charging system would work to recover charges and did this approach act as a deterrent.

The Chief Fire Officer informed the committee that since the trial there had been £6,500 of income generated from the charging system. They had a good automatic financing system to get letters and invoices dispatched to businesses and that they had no refusals of payment.

Councillor Shield asked what enforcement action could be taken to address malicious false calls and whether the reports were referred to the police to investigate.

The Chief Fire Officer described the process when dealing with malicious fake calls to the fire service. He informed the committee that if the control room suspected that a call was malicious, more information on the incident would be requested and if it was not forthcoming the caller would be warned that the call was recorded and they had the facility to stun the mobile device. The Chief Fire Officer explained that this tended to solve the problem but some callers did use phone boxes. In these circumstances the location of the calls could be identified and the police were notified to monitor the area. He added, if there were areas that received high volumes of nuisance calls, briefing sessions would be held in local schools to educate children of the dangers in making malicious calls.

The committee were happy to support the proposal to introduce a charging system for certain businesses when they had attended multiple unwanted fire signals to their premises.

The Chief Fire Officer informed the committee that there would be consultation events held on the Integrated Risk Management Plan. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer agreed to circulate the dates and venues of the events to Members.

Resolved

- (i) That the IRMP action plan and consultation be noted.
- (ii) That a formal response be sent to the Chief Fire Officer on behalf of the Committee.

8 Progress of Recommendations following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Cybercrime

With the Committee's agreement, the Chair changed the order of business for the agenda and the item on the review of Cybercrime was to be considered before the agenda item on the draft Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2020-25.

The Chair introduced the Cyber Prevent and Protect Supervisor, Durham Constabulary who was in attendance to give the Committee an update on the progress of recommendations following the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Cybercrime and activity of the Safe Durham Partnership Safer Cyber Group (for copy see file of minutes).

The Cyber Prevent and Protect Supervisor explained that tackling and preventing cyber enabled crime was a strategic priority within the draft Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2020-25. She noted that the key areas were to raise awareness of the general population about staying safe online, reducing the risk to the most vulnerable groups and building resilience of local businesses of the threat of cybercrime.

The Cyber Prevent and Protect Supervisor added that there were core deliverables within each of the areas of work that included partnership working with the Police, the Local Authority and Crime Stoppers UK would achieve the overall priority.

The Cyber Prevent and Protect Supervisor advised the committee that awareness of the general public was being raised by attendance of the Cyber Team at large scale annual events including the PCVC's Superheroes event at Shildon and Bikewise at Police HQ. She informed the committee that digital hygiene training had been delivered to all Durham Constabulary Staff and Officers and Front Counter staff had received cyber security knowledge to help advise members of the public if required. In addition, awareness sessions had been delivered to WI groups.

The Cyber Prevent and Protect Supervisor informed the Committee that presentations including the use of virtual reality headsets had been made at schools to staff, pupils and parents. The aim of these sessions was to not only protect young people against cybercrime but also to prevent them from becoming involved in cybercrime in the future. The Committee were informed that the use of VR headsets in the presentations had been a huge success to engage the children.

To help reduce the risk to vulnerable groups the Cyber Prevent and Protect Supervisor explained that a "Hack" video had been made in partnership with New College Durham to highlight dangers of cybercrime. The video had been shown to small groups initially to see whether it was fit for purpose before it being rolled out further. In addition, various campaigns had commenced including Fearless Crime Stoppers and Young Friends against Scams to reduce risk to vulnerable groups.

New College Durham had offered various courses around cyber security including degree and apprenticeship opportunities to help build resilience of local businesses to the threat of cybercrime. Various conferences had also been held around cybercrime to offer businesses advice and guidance. The Cyber Prevent and Protect Supervisor informed the committee that a Lego game had been devised and delivered to businesses and universities to show them consequences of their choices without causing them any harm.

The Chair thanked the Cyber Prevent and Protect Supervisor, Durham Constabulary for her presentation and asked members of the committee for any questions or comments.

Mr Cooke asked whether Cybercrime covered scams or cold callers as he had been subject to many cold calls over numerous months and wondered if anything could be done about them.

The Cyber Prevent and Protect Supervisor, Durham Constabulary informed the Committee that her team only dealt with cybercrime and Friends against scams dealt with scams but neither team dealt with cold callers.

Councillor Crute asked how the 'Hack' video would be disseminated to schools.

The Cyber Prevent and Protect Supervisor, Durham Constabulary said that consideration would be given to a further launch event that may be held to promote the video before it was rolled out and disseminated to schools as a training aid.

The Strategic Manager - Partnerships, Adults and Health Services added that New college were open to do other projects in the future.

Councillor Turnbull informed the Committee that he had attended a breakfast seminar relating to Cybercrime. Private organisations and businesses had been invited and he commented that this was a positive initiative to raise awareness to how vulnerable they had appeared to be in relation to the dangers of cybercrime.

Councillor Boyes also cited an example of an organisation he had involvement with who nearly signed off an order for a significant amount of money until they realised it was a scam.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer asked the Committee to consider the presentation within the context of Appendix 2 of the report that provided an update on progress of recommendations from the Committee's previous review. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer informed members that the "Hack" video was an outcome of recommendation F within appendix 2. The Committee were advised that this was the second update on recommendations and were asked to confirm that they were happy to sign off the review of the recommendations as they were either completed or delivered as ongoing activity.

Resolved

- (i) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That the review of the report recommendations be noted as completed.

9 Draft Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2020-25

The Chair introduced the Strategic Manager - Partnerships, Adults and Health Services who was in attendance to give a presentation on the draft Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2020-25 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager - Partnerships, Adults and Health Services informed the Committee that David Orford who had been the Chair of the Safe Durham Partnership for the last three years and had led on the Plan would be replaced by Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer Keith Wanley from January 2020. She explained that the vision 2035 for the next 15 years had now been signed off.

The Strategic Manager - Partnerships, Adults and Health Services confirmed that the Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2016-19 had now ended ensuing the new draft plan 2020-25 being produced. She added that the new plan had been based on evidence that had been collected and collated to create the vision to ensure 'a county where every adult and child will feel and be safe'.

To help enable delivery of the vision, the Strategic Manager - Partnerships, Adults and Health Services noted that six draft strategic priorities had been agreed that also linked into the Police, Crime and Victims Commissioner's Plan.

The priorities were:

- Promote being safe and feeling safe in your community
- Support victims and protect vulnerable people from harm
- Prevent: Counter Terrorism, Radicalisation and Violent Extremism
- Reduce reoffending
- Alcohol and substance misuse reduction
- Tackle and prevent cyber enabled crime

The Strategic Manager - Partnerships, Adults and Health Services informed the committee that each strategic priority had a group to take it forward and monitor performance. She highlighted that the draft Safe Durham Plan was online and out for consultation from 17 December 2019 until 14 February 2020 to see whether people agreed with each of the strategic priorities, whether there were any gaps and if people had any comments about the plan.

The Chair thanked the Strategic Manager - Partnerships, Adults and Health Services for her presentation and asked members of the committee for any questions or comments.

Councillor Boyes was concerned that road safety was not included in the strategic priorities within the Safe Durham Partnership Plan for 2020-25. He wanted to know if this was a deliberate omission.

The Strategic Manager - Partnerships, Adults and Health Services explained that although road safety was not set out in the strategic priorities of the draft plan, it was felt it would require regular updates and a report would be presented to the Partnership on an annual basis.

Councillor Boyes thought it was a major priority that should be included in the plan as work was still ongoing within this area to reduce casualties. The Chief Fire Officer (CDDFRS) reiterated how important road safety was as a performance report within the Committee's agenda illustrated that there was a significant increase in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions within County Durham.

In addition, Councillor Avery commented that he agreed that road safety should be included within the strategic priorities that the Safe Durham Partnership plan should focus on.

Councillor Maddison raised concern with reporting procedures and available data of recorded road traffic collisions. Cllr Maddison explained that at a recent Highways meeting it had been highlighted that there were issues caused on minor roads with speeding but when trying to produce statistics Highways did not have access to data on all accidents.

Councillor Liddle explained that a Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny working group had been established to investigate road safety and ways to reduce the number of casualties in County Durham. This involved exploring approaches to collect and collate data from various sources including data from insurance claims. She added support that road safety be included in the plan as a priority.

Councillor Boyes noted that in view of the comments made by several members, the committee felt that road safety should be included as an objective within the new Safe Durham Partnership Plan.

He felt that, whilst water safety was an important issue, the work that partners had done to mitigate the risks in this area had thankfully helped to reduce the number of deaths and near misses and this could be excluded as a priority within the draft plan.

The Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary provided clarification and advised the Committee that as a rule all road collisions whether major or minor should be reported to the police but did not record or investigate incidents that were classed as a damage only incident.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that a response containing comments on the draft Safe Durham Partnership Plan would be sent to the Strategic Manager, Adults and Health Services for consideration.

Resolved

- (i) That the Safe Durham Partnership Plan be noted.
- (ii) That a formal response be sent to the Strategic Manager Adults and Health Services on behalf of the Committee.

10 Quarter Two 2019/20 Performance Management Report

The Committee considered the Quarter Two 2019/20 Performance Management Report (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved

That the report be noted.

11 Overview and Scrutiny Review Activity Update

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update in relation to the review activities of the Committee. He advised that work was ongoing to develop a draft road safety strategy and details on future activity would be circulated to members.

Resolved

That the verbal update be noted.