

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held remotely via **Microsoft Teams** on **Monday 4 January 2021** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Avery, A Bainbridge, A Batey, J Charlton, R Crute, S Durham, C Hampson, S Iveson, B Kellett, L Kennedy, H Liddle, J Maitland, E Mavin, J Stephenson, J Turnbull and C Wilson

Co-opted Employees/Officers:

Chief Fire Officer S Errington

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated the Chief Fire Officer, Stuart Errington who had been awarded the Queens' Fire Service Medal in the New Year Honours.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Maitland and Mr A J Cooke.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held 20 November 2020 and were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillors A Batey and J Turnbull declared an interest in Item 7 - Bonfire Period Activity 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 Probation Programme- 'plans for the future model'

The Chair welcomed the Acting Chief Executive of the Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (DTVCRC), John Graham and the Head of Area for Durham and Darlington Probation, National Probation Service (NPS), Kay Nicolson who were in attendance to provide the Committee with an update presentation in relation to the Probation Programme - 'plans for the future model' (for copy see file of minutes).

The Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC thanked Members for the opportunity to speak and noted there had been significant changes in terms of plans for the probation service. He reminded the Committee of the roles of the two organisations, in terms of offenders:

- NPS – responsible for managing high risk offenders, advising courts, allocating cases to CRC's, supporting victims, and managing approved premises. NPS deliver some Accredited Programmes, including those which address sexual offending.
- CRC's – responsible for supervising low and medium-risk offenders, providing through-the-gate resettlement services to released prisoners. CRC's deliver Unpaid Work requirements and mandated offending related Accredited Programmes.

He asked Members to recall that in May 2019 there had been three strategic priorities made by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in terms of probation, those being: getting the change right; professional recognition; and maximising influence.

The Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC noted that the plans for the future now were for the work undertaken by CRCs to be undertaken by the NPS in terms of responsibility for offender management, unpaid work, accredited programmes, resettlement and court advice – across low, medium and high-risk offenders will be held by the National Probation Service in England and Wales.

He added there would be a continued role for the voluntary and private sector in the delivery of wrap-around and rehabilitative services through the dynamic framework and regional innovation fund. Members were asked to note that the North East had split from Yorkshire and became a separate probation region in April 2020.

The Committee were informed that North East, Regional Probation Director would be Bronwen Elphick, the former Chief Executive Officer from DTVCRC who had attended committee on previous occasions. It was explained that from June 2021 the three probation organisations locally, NPS North East, DTV CRC and Northumbria CRC would come together to form the new NPS North East. Members learned that the North East region would be subdivided into Probation Delivery Units (PDUs) headed by an Assistant Chief Officer grade, with Durham and Darlington being a single PDU with Kay Nicolson as the Head. The Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC noted the transition process was well-underway to re-unify services with the aim of taking the best from all three probation organisations to develop the future delivery model.

The Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC explained that the Justice System continued to face significant challenges in the face of COVID-19, nationally and locally: levels of face to face contact were limited by social distancing restrictions in fixed estate; unpaid work vans could previously carry eight service users; Accredited Programmes involved groups of up to twelve service users and two tutors; Victim Contact Scheme had operated utilising remote technology, with no backlogs in engaging with victims; resettlement work in prisons was restricted; and there were significant Court backlogs.

The Committee learned that locally, despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the level of face to face contact was amongst the highest in the country. Members noted there was no enforcement backlog in the local Courts, breaches, and enforcement of Orders, where required, were up to date. It was explained that the funding and structure for the Homelessness Prevention Team had been extended, with a number of successes locally. The Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC noted that the delivery of Unpaid Work was the third highest in the country and 131 percent of pre-COVID-19 hours were being offered. He explained that the Accredited Programme Delivery had the second highest rate in the country and was now at 85 percent of pre-COVID-19 levels. It was added that Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Board meetings had continued, utilising technology to ensure service delivery, with that method to be taken forward as standard practice within the new NPS. He noted that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) had praised the probation response to COVID-19 nationally and made specific reference to performance locally.

The Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC noted that, in terms of the challenge beyond COVID-19, there would still be backlogs to deal with and while the transition was well underway there was still a lot to do.

He added that work would be undertaken integrating the new North East probation structure into existing local and regional structures and in terms of addressing any duplication, true collaboration, and joint commissioning. He concluded by noting the challenge in terms of the reoffending rate, albeit not as difficult locally as in some other areas, and to protect the public.

The Chair thanked the Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC and asked as regards court backlogs and associated timescales. The Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC noted that he was on the national steering group relating to community service and noted there would be a backlog after transition, into the Autumn 2021, notwithstanding any other COVID-19 restrictions. He added that prior to Christmas 2020 the service was running at 80 percent of previous capacity, receiving orders at around 125 percent of previous capacity, and increase of around 40 orders per week.

The Chair asked if there would be any opportunity to increase capacity. The Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC noted that the DTVCRC element was via contract, though working with the MoJ to look to bring in additional resources. He explained one of the issues, even with additional staff, was welfare provision, as those reporting to carry out community service would need welfare facilities at a community site. He noted that additional funding was being sourced to provide portable toilets or a welfare cabin, working with Local Authorities.

The Chair asked if returning under one umbrella would help in terms of avoiding duplication and having funding in one pot. The Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC noted that a unit was being set up that required cooperation between probation and health and between probation and Police. He noted the recent Integrated Reoffender Management Strategy, a joint probation/Police piece of work, and that there was a push centrally to look to identify opportunities and then once understood then this could be used to emphasise that it was understood best at a local level in terms of identifying such duplication and opportunities. He added that work had been undertaken locally by the Reducing Reoffending Group, the next step being the dynamic framework, with competitions ongoing in that regard. The Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC noted there was also the regional innovation fund, and this could help in terms of new ways of working and joint commissioning, however, he noted that an organisation would need to take the first step in that regard. The Chair thanked the Acting Chief Executive, DTVCRC and noted that the North East no longer being linked to North Yorkshire could also be useful in being able to work on issues more locally.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

7 Bonfire Period Activity

The Chair asked the Chief Fire Officer, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) to provide the Committee with an update presentation in relation to Bonfire Period Activity (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer thanked the Chair and Members and referred to the presentation slides included in the agenda pack. He explained information related to the bonfire period of 2020 and also included information related to arson in County Durham, noting arson was also a particular issue for the North East region.

The Chief Fire Officer noted that the aim of the presentation was to give information of the key data over the bonfire period, the two weeks over the period 25 October to 7 November 2020, not just 5 November, to smooth out the data when looking at a number of issues. He explained factors in relation to the bonfire period this year included: the 5 November was on a Thursday; the bonfire period in 2019 was particularly wet in comparison to 2020; and that in 2020, COVID-19 restrictions resulted in most organised displays being cancelled.

The Committee noted that in terms of the numbers of calls received, graphs within the presentation set out the data, with spikes over a two to three day period around 5 November, with 2020 having around 35 percent more calls than the wet 2019 period. He added that looking at the five year figures it had still been expected that there would have been fewer calls, given COVID-19 restrictions.

The Chief Fire Officer explained as regards looking at the longer term and new national Incident Report System data, while figures were up compared to the five year average, they were down in terms of the 10 year average. He noted that there had been a steady increase in the last five years and with a 23 percent increase on Bonfire Night itself, again concerning given the COVID-19 restrictions. It was explained that bonfires would usually be classified as Deliberate and Not Known (DNK) secondary fires and there was an obvious link to anti-social behaviour, with a graph highlighting figures from the last three years, with a “normal” spike of incidents on the 5 November, as in other years. Members were referred to a breakdown of the DNK secondary fires by Station area, with a three year graph of the number of incidents of within areas of the period, with large increases in 2020 in the Peterlee, High Handenhold and Wheatley Hill Station areas. The Chief Fire Officer noted an accompanying graph set out the change in incidents year on year, with large increases in those areas as previously mentioned. He noted that the graphs and data for Bonfire Night itself followed a very similar pattern, with increases in the Peterlee, High Handenhold and Wheatley Hill Station areas.

The Committee note graphs setting out the number of “false alarms” and it was noted that numbers appeared to be fairly static, with a false alarm often being where the Fire Service is called to a bonfire that was being ran as the Service would expect, in a responsible manner so that the fire could not spread, with an adult present, and with the correct amount of social distancing being applied.

Members were referred to graphs highlighting violence against staff over the bonfire period. The Chief Fire Officer noted that it had been a huge issue raised by the media and he would wish to reassure Members that within County Durham and Darlington there was a very low number of incidents of violence against crews.

He noted that this was a factor in why there had not been a great deal of publicity within the CDDFRS area in terms of the issue, while other Fire and Rescue Services with a more prevalent issue having publicised the issue more. He added that while there were a small number of incidents, any incident of violence against crews was a significant concern and all crews were highly trained in terms of dealing with those types of situation and had good Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and procedures in place. He added that fortunately, no staff had been injured over the bonfire period. Members were referred to a summary slide, setting out the main statistics relating to the bonfire period and numbers of DNK fires, noting a significant spike on bonfire night, with just over 50 percent of incidents occurring between 4.00pm and 10.00pm. The Chief Fire Officer noted additional resources in terms of call handling were allocated at those times. He added that there were tired and tested procedures in place working with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services to ensure incidents close to Service borders were spread out across the Services.

In respect of arson levels in County Durham, the Chief Fire Officer referred Members to the slides within the presentation and agenda pack. He explained that arson was a specific concern in the County and noted the definition of arson being: “the crime of intentionally starting a fire in order to damage or destroy something, especially a building”. He added that arson was measured as either deliberate primary fires (buildings, vehicles, crops, woodland) or deliberate secondary fires (rubbish, waste-ground, grass).

The Committee noted graphs of incidents per 100,000 population showed that Durham was the highest Fire Service in terms of deliberate primary fires. Members noted other regional Fire and Rescue Services were within the top five, highlighting that it was also a regional issue. It was explained the majority of such fires in County Durham were vehicle fires. Members noted the 10 year trends in terms of the number of incidents, with an overall increase.

The Committee noted graphs of incidents per 100,000 population showed that Durham was the third highest in terms of deliberate secondary fires. Members noted this too was an issue for other Fire and Rescue Services within the region. Reference was made to the 10 year trends in terms of the number of incidents, with an overall increase, though with a decrease in the last year.

In respect of which areas within the County were most affected, the Committee noted that for primary fires, nearly 50 percent occurred within the Peterlee and Wheatley Hill station areas, with 73 percent of those incidents being vehicles. In terms of secondary fires, the main areas of concern were the Peterlee, Wheatley Hill and High Handenhold station areas.

In terms of how the CDDFRS was tackling deliberate fires it was noted that there were a number of initiatives: including the Arson Reduction Team (ART), introduced in 2019; a significant increase in educational activity with schools; and diversionary activities, such as the Phoenix Fire Champions.

Members noted that many deliberate primary fires were linked to organised crime groups and that many deliberate secondary fires were linked to illegal fly tipping. The Chief Fire Officer noted that tackling the issues required a multi-agency approach involving the Police; Local Authorities; Community Wardens; and Housing Associations.

The Chief Fire Officer noted that as the issue of arson was a big issue for the region, the North East Fire and Rescue Service Project had been established, involving the Fire and Rescue Services from across the region and several Universities to try and get an understanding in terms of what was driving the behaviour and why there were such significant numbers in the North East in comparison to other areas in the country. He added that while there were links in terms of deprivation, it was felt having a level of academic rigor would help in terms of providing a challenge on a number of assumptions in relation to the issue.

The Chief Fire Officer concluded by reiterating the challenge faced and the progress in terms of the positive impact of ongoing work over the last few years, however, he noted the statistics highlighted that there was a lot of work yet to be done across a number of agencies in order to tackle the problem.

The Chair thanked the Chief Fire Officer and all his staff for their hard work in the face of all the challenges. He noted that as regards bonfires and primary and secondary arson fires, the vast majority appeared to be in the East of the county and asked whether one was a continuation of the other. The Chief Fire Officer noted that there was a significant issue and that Members of the Committee would recall the concentrated work undertaken in respect of the issue a few years ago in the East of the county. He noted that work had impacted the figures, numbers having come down, however, it was still a significant issue in that area. He added 75 percent of vehicle fires occurred within the Easington area and that was concerning for the Fire Service.

Councillor R Crute, Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board asked as how progress would be monitored in terms of primary and secondary fires, noting he had not seen reference within the performance report in terms of such fires and asked if they were included within the anti-social behaviour and environmental anti-social behaviour figures. He noted the Chief Fire Officer had mentioned the rate of primary and secondary fires, adding the Committee could help the CDDFRS in tracking their progress, based upon the good work that had been undertaken, to see where the greatest impact was being achieved.

Councillor J Charlton noted there had been an increase in fly-tipping and asked if it was felt that the closure of the household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) for a number of weeks had been a factor in terms of arson incidents.

Councillor J Turnbull noted an issue was the length of time for bulky items to be taken away, where residents were paying for the council to remove items, such as old bed frames and mattresses.

He noted it could take up to two or three weeks in some cases, with then the bed and mattresses being taken and used as fuel for fires and asked if the system could be looked at in order to have such items removed quicker.

The Chief Fire Officer noted that figures Councillor R Crute referred to were within the performance report, however, not set out as explicitly as they had been previously. He added that within the process of reducing the number of indicators presented to Committee, to help give clarity, the numbers were within other indicators. He reassured Members that the figures were discussed at the Safe Durham Partnership and the Fire Service were looking at the issue very closely. He added that in terms of the Committee, he would be happy to present a regular or annual item for Members. He added it was a big issue for the North East region, for County Durham and specifically in the Easington area of the county and would welcome the additional scrutiny through a regular update at Committee.

In reference to fly-tipping and any link to HWRC closures for a few weeks, he noted that for all that fly-tipping was a huge issue, he did not believe a lot of the fly-tipping was domestic, rather linked to works being carried out..

He noted the excellent work of the Council in terms of the prosecution of those fly-tipping and explained the Fire Service had worked very closely with the Council over the COVID-19 period, through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), to understand the impact in terms of the HWRCs being temporarily closed. He explained the impact had been in terms of households burning off garden waste which resulted in an increase in "false alarm good intent" reports where calls related to smoke and fire that was subsequently found to be controlled burning within private gardens and in general that did not cause the Fire Service a significant amount of problems. He reiterated that fly-tipping was a huge issue and one the Fire Service was working with the Local Authority on, with fire crews now being able to report incidents directly to the Council. He explained that where crews noted fly-tipping in the course of their normal activities, or when undertaking specific patrols in high risk areas, the direct reporting allowed the Council to respond quickly. The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the impact of austerity was still being felt across all those agencies and all were having to deal with issues with the level of resources that were available. He reiterated that while work was being undertaken with the Council, it may be more work would need to be done.

The Chief Fire Officer noted that the quicker waste was removed the better, and that it was important there was a good link in terms of reporting of waste and in terms of collections. He noted he felt it was important that there was good public understanding of process to try and match the collection day to the day waste would be put out. He added that there was the education element in terms of the process, however, he noted there was an element of personal responsibility in addition.

The Chair noted the point in terms of the “intelligence on the ground” and added that if the Council could link in with the Fire Service and the Police that would be beneficial, recalling the previous work in terms of Home Safety Visits, where the Fire Service, being a trusted and respected “blue light” service, had been able to gather a lot of useful information from residents. He noted he felt something similar could be helpful, noting that in his local area there were issues in terms of arson relating to waste and empty properties.

Councillor A Batey, Vice-Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board noted the secondary fire figures in relation to High Handenhold and noted the Chief Fire Officer was aware of her concerns. She noted her concerns in relation to the links to fly-tipping, also the lack of pickups and a perceived lack of risk. She noted while appreciating the work the Fire Service joining up with the Council and its Neighbourhood Warden Teams, she felt that there was more work that could be done. She noted recent experience within the High Handenhold area of an abandoned vehicle, left for seven days before it was removed, the Police not perceiving it to be a risk. She added she felt it was a risk as it was left within a one way system and also it was a risk from a Fire Service perspective. She acknowledged the good work that was being undertaken, however, she felt there was a lack of understanding on the ground from some services.

Councillor A Batey noted the Local Authority and Fire Service could improve their promotion of the problems that had been experienced and the work undertaken to tackle those problems. She explained that she felt once information was brought together it would be beneficial for joint statements to be made by the Fire Service and the Local Authority in terms of the issues faced.

Councillor C Wilson noted that her area, West Auckland, had at one point had the second highest number of secondary fires. She noted that while fly-tipping was still an issue, a number of young people who had been starting the secondary fire had been taken on visits to the Police cells and the local Fire Station to show the implications of their actions and the work taken to deal with such incidents. She added she felt that education had been beneficial and helped reduce the number of incidents. She noted she was horrified to hear of attacks on fire crews and asked how they would deal with such attacks. The Chair noted the Chief Fire Officer had noted it was not a large issue in County Durham and Darlington, however, other local Fire Services, such as Tyne and Wear, were facing a larger problem.

Councillor J Stephenson noted the statistics and that there did not appear to be link to fly-tipping and secondary fires in her area, Annfield Plain. She explained secondary fires in her area appeared to be linked to anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug taking by young people. She noted they were setting fire to the gorse within the local nature reserve area, a risk to local wildlife in addition. She noted those types of fire were constant and many did not get reported to the Fire Service and therefore her concern was that while the statistics did not look terribly bad in the Consett Fire Station area, there was a hidden problem.

Councillor R Crute noted the issue raised in respect of the how quickly fly-tipping is removed and secondary fires and explained that the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee had looked at link between environmental cleanliness and anti-social behaviour and suggested that when the issues was being considered by each Committee then Members from the other Committee could be invited or there could be joint meeting.

Councillor B Avery noted he felt there had not been much improvement since the last report, however, he emphasised he did not feel this was the fault of the Fire Service, adding he felt the Fire Service was often the service left to deal with issues that had not been address by other services or agencies. He explained he had several incidents within his area where he had reported the issues many times through the normal channels, then he would need to raise the issues with a Head of Service or a Corporate Director. He noted that should not need to be the case and that he agreed with the points raised by fellow Councillors. He agreed with the comments made by Councillor R Crute in terms of joint meetings, however, he felt the main issue was for the Council to get on top of cleaning up fly-tipping more quickly.

Councillor B Avery noted while many residents would take up the Council service for bulky items to be removed, many other residents would not and simply put their items out on the street, and they would remain in place for several weeks until reported by Councillors. He noted the success of the work of the Community Action Team (CAT) going into areas to target specific issues and recalled at the last meeting of the Committee that there would be a team put in place in Easington after the CAT left to continue that good work. He noted in his area, Ferryhill, that when the CAT was in place, they got issues resolved quickly, however, once they had left the situation returned to normal. Councillor B Avery understood that there was an issue in terms of resources and the numbers of Neighbourhood Wardens, however, he felt that the system was not working. He added that he felt it was an issue for Chief Officers to get together and resolve as issues as often took a long time via the normal channels. He noted the issue of vehicle fires, predominantly in the East of the County, adding he did not know why that was the case however he felt it was an issue the Police should be more involved with.

The Chair agreed with Councillor B Avery and that the issues identified would need to be tackle by a number of agencies working together, also agreeing that it was unfair to put the issues solely on the Fire Service. He added he, like his fellow Councillors, would have several calls to make in terms of actions to be taken in their areas based upon incidents that took place over the holiday period.

The Chief Fire Officer responded to Councillor A Batey in relation to issues raised regarding High Handenhold. He noted that fly-tipping was an issue across the whole of the Fire Service's area and he noted that the solution was quite complex and was a balance of resources, ensuring HWRCs were open and accessible, ensuring Neighbourhood Wardens were targeting areas of fly-tipping and with the correct equipment and cameras to record and report to the Police.

He added that it had been mentioned as regards the work of the CAT, with a great impact over a small period of time and while the work of the team was very good, there also needed to be a change in culture in terms of fly-tipping, with education and enforcement together, with the Local Authority, Fire Service and Police working together.

The Chief Fire Officer noted the example given by Councillor C Wilson of the work undertaken in West Auckland and while successful he noted there were differences in comparison to the Easington area, with primary fire incidents in that area being linked to organised crime. He added that the issues in respect of secondary fires were similar across the county, and noted the work of the Phoenix Fire Champions in terms of understanding why fires were set, such as the gorse fires previously mentioned, and linking in with the Local Authorities in terms of fly-tipping and illegal waste dumping, helping to get across the impact on the Fire Service and Policing. He emphasised the vast levels of experience within the fire crews and explained that those crew were very successful in dealing with the public and he felt that contributed to having the low number of incidents of violence against fire crews. He added that it was not solely about education, with all fire appliances having CCTV and that prosecution was also important.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the point raised by Councillor J Stephenson in terms of anti-social behaviour and reporting of fires, he noted he would like to think the majority of incidents would be reported and explained he spent seven years of his career working in Consett. He explained that it would generally only be a very small fire that was not reported to the Fire Service and noted slightly different crewing arrangements undertaken in Annfield Plain and Consett, across the High Handenhold area, in terms of COVID-19, with a crew utilising a small targeted response vehicle to respond to such incidents, providing a presence in high risk areas, helping to encourage the right types of behaviour.

In respect to the comments made by Councillor B Avery, The Chief Fire Officer noted that the Fire Service worked very closely with the Council, with the Chief Fire Officer having a monthly meeting with the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, working closely with the Head of Environment and with an Officer from the Fire Service chairing the Safe Durham Partnership Board. He noted that the issue of resources was also important and noted the performance report on the agenda had information relating to the Safer Streets Initiative, with the Fire Service seeing that as a significant, targeted response within the area that had the largest problem in this regard. He added that with that initiative the resources allocated were fairly significant and, for such an approach to target the whole of the Easington area as an example, then the resources required would be such that resources would need to come from Central Government to help tackle the issue. He added that part of the aim of the North East Project, across the four Fire and Rescue Services across the North East, was to highlight what the issues were, have some academic rigor, and then to use that as a base for potentially increased funding, not just for Fire and Rescue Services but also for Local Authorities and Policing so that issues could be tackled.

The Chief Fire Officer thanked Members for their comments and scrutiny and the support expressed in terms of trying to solve the issues. He added he agreed with the suggestion from Councillor R Crute in terms of linking the issue across several Overview and Scrutiny Committees to help get the level of interest and engagement needed to make a big difference going forward.

The Chair thanked the Chief Fire Officer and noted that the issues raised were not unique to County Durham, they were also issues regionally and therefore there could be a need for a regionwide initiative to look at the issues. He added that he agreed with Members that the information in terms of the cost to local communities needed to be shared with local communities so that residents could understand the actual impact.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

8 Quarter Two, 2020/21 Performance Management Report

The Chair asked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee to provide the Committee with an update in relation to the Quarter Two, 2020/21 Performance Management Report (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer thanked the Chair and referred Members to the information as set out within the report pack. He explained that it set out the five key questions in terms of the area of focus for the Committee and the performance data relating to those areas. He explained that while overall levels of crime were down, those relating to violence against the person had increased slightly by four percent. He noted that the report referred to anti-social behaviour including anti-social riding of motorbikes and incidents of fly-tipping. Members noted statistics relating to the performance of the probation service, having received an update from probation earlier. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted in respect of the Safer Streets Initiative, information had been included in the previous item and the Committee had received an update from the Council's Head of Community Protection Services at its last meeting. Councillors were referred to the information relating to the Drug and Alcohol Service, with an increase in alcohol related anti-social behaviour of 26.7 percent in comparison to the same period the previous year, with the issue being monitored by Durham Constabulary.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred to statistics relating to domestic violence, referring to the detailed report received by the Committee at its September meeting. He noted there had been a two percent increase in comparison with quarter one the previous year, however, August to September there had been a 21 percent reduction in reported incidents. It was added that report highlighted new reporting and triage systems, including the work of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

In relation to road safety, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted an decrease in the number killed or seriously injured in comparison to the previous year, although there had been an increase in the number of children killed or seriously injured, from 11 the previous year to 16.

The Chair thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor R Crute asked as regards the incidents of domestic violence reducing by 21 percent. He noted that a reduction was positive, however, within the current pandemic one might have expected an increase in incidents. He added he was concerned as violence against the person had increased by four percent in the last year, seven percent in quarter two and those figures incorporated the domestic violence incidents. He asked if it was possible to disaggregate those figures to try to get a true figure in terms of how and why the reported incidents of domestic violence had reduced.

The Chair agreed additional information would be useful, looking the accuracy of the figures and whether there had been a change in how figures were reported, for example convicted cases being reported rather than reported incidents. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted he would refer the query to the appropriate Officers.

The Chair noted the issue in terms of anti-social behaviour with young men on uninsured motorbikes, especially in the East of the County. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted the report highlighted issues in the Wheatley Hill area, adding the previous performance report had referred to partnership work undertaken through Operation Endurance. He noted there had been media articles at the time, demonstrating the impact of the work across County Durham and Darlington including information as regards vehicles that had been seized and crushed and he would report back to the Committee in that regard.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.