

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Police and Crime Panel** held in **Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Darlington** on **Thursday 14 December 2023** at **1.30 pm**

Present:

Councillor L Brown (Chair)

Durham County Council:

Councillors L Hovvels, R Potts and S Quinn (Substitute) (substitute for D Boyes)

Darlington Borough Council:

Councillors G Lee (Vice-Chair)

Independent Co-opted Members:

Mr N Hallam and Mr R Rodiss

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Boyes, J Charlton, D Nicholls and A Savory.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor S Quinn substituted for Councillor D Boyes.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held 21 September 2023 and Special meeting held on 25 September 2023 were agreed as a correct records and signed by the Chair.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Clerk to the Panel, Helen Bradley confirmed that feedback in relation to the process for Confirmation Hearings had been sent to the Home Office and the Panel would be update as regards any response.

5 Quarterly Performance Report Quarter Two 2023/24

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Joy Allen presented her Performance and Delivery Update Report which covered the period July to September 2023 (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor G Lee noted the increase in civilian workers, from 590 to 1,200 as previously noted by Councillor R Potts and noted a further increase. The PCC noted the issue was an operational issue and would ask the question from the Force perspective.

Councillor L Hovvels noted, in relation to Right Care, Right Person, that mental health issues were often hidden in terms of their impact upon resources and noted that elements such as poverty and the cost-of-living crisis were impacting on the issue. She added she felt that signposting to relevant services was important, however, noted that at some point a service would need to deal with an issue and there would be an associated cost. Councillor L Hovvels noted Operation Endurance and the scourge of off-road bikes and the drain on both Police and Local Authority resources, noting resources she had used in terms of prevention measures. Councillor L Hovvels noted the issue of illegal vapes and asked as regards Government plans and the work of the Police alongside Trading Standards colleague from the Council.

The PCC noted the change in focus in relation to mental health issues, noting that the new Chief Constable, R Bacon had been the national lead on the issue and therefore was keenly aware of the issues. She emphasised that the Force would not be withdrawing all support in that regard, rather there would be the opportunity to signpost and refer, on a risk basis, to other more appropriate services. She added she had met with the Chair of the Mental Health Trust and that all would work in close partnership on the issue.

The PCC noted the work of Operation Endurance, and that County Durham and Darlington contained a number of rural areas. She reminded the Panel of 'hotspot' funding given to Town and Parish Councils, together with match funding from Local Councillors. She noted that target hardening in the east of the county had proven effective and that the issues went beyond anti-social behaviour and included damage and road safety. The PCC noted visits with the Vice-Chair and Kevan Jones MP looking at repairs to damage caused by accidents. She noted that in relation to road safety, she was working with MPs at the highest level to make representation to the Home Office. She added that the team for Operation Endurance was a small team, however, had brought in support from Neighbourhood Teams and use of drone technology.

The PCC noted that intelligence from communities was vital in being able to target offenders, noting both Crimestoppers and local 'garage watch' schemes.

The PCC noted her concerns as regards illegal vapes and while Public Health noted that vaping was better than smoking, there was a criminal black market in relation to vapes. She noted she was lead for the national group on substance and addiction and that she would take the information out to our partners in terms of the risk of death from synthetic drugs, noting high numbers of deaths in the US from such synthetics.

Councillor G Lee noted the number of accidents and near-misses, and that it was perhaps an issue for Local Authorities to look at in respect of speed limits. He noted the issues raised in respect of Police time dealing with mental health issues. He noted an example of where the Police had acted in preventing a suicide, adding that while signposting was important, it was important that the Police were able to respond in such circumstances. He noted issues in terms of crisis nurse availability and asked if the PCC could provide some reassurance and speak to the NHS in this regard.

The PCC noted she had spoken to the Chief Constable in relation to Road Safety issues earlier in the day, and the specific issue referred to in Redworth relating to solar speed visors. She noted an upcoming event 'vision zero' in terms of preventable road safety deaths. She noted regional differences in approaches, noting Durham and Cleveland did not have fixed cameras and it was for the Chief Constable to determine where to site mobile cameras. She noted that if School Crossing Patrol Guards had bodycams, that may help in identifying dangerous drivers.

Councillor S Quinn noted the ability to report incidents electronically, however, noted that some people would want to speak to a person/operator. The PCC noted that many people preferred the self-service methods and added that channel helped to relieve pressure from both the 101 and 999 lines, allowing for quicker responses on those numbers.

R Rodiss noted a 9 percent increase in violent crime and asked if there was any further information as regards the increase. The PCC noted that referred to a number of different issues, adding that the figures could be broken down further. R Rodiss noted he was referring to offences against the person and explained that victims often knew their attacker and that often such violence represented repeat offences. He noted he wished to understand the 9 percent increase, whether it was improved or increased reporting or more incidents. He asked about the resolution rate, noting he felt it was poor when looking at an offence that could be resolved quickly. The PCC noted she could bring back further details in terms of resolution and detection.

She noted that while the rate appeared low, the rate was the best within the country, adding some issues were with the CPS.

R Rodiss noted that Durham County Council had closed down an illegal vape shop in his area, only for another to open within a nail bar. He also noted the use of snus, a tobacco product, by footballers and the impact that could have. The PCC noted that was sadly the case, with organised crime groups operating in terms of illegal vapes. In terms of the impact of footballers as role models, she had written to the Football Association in terms of issues such as snus and nitrous oxide, noting that there should be no normalisation of their use. R Rodiss noted the supply of heroin during the war in Afghanistan and the increase in deaths as a result of the drug being cut with other products. The PCC noted national work in this regard, with many synthetic drugs being available via post. She added she was the national lead on the issue of Drug Driving and explained that Durham was the lead Force nationally in terms of the drug driving campaign. She noted the links between drugs and crime, and explained as regards current legislation in terms of cost of tests. She noted the good work with employers in terms of their drivers, with CCTV within vehicles and random drug testing.

Councillor L Hovvels noted the work in terms of suicide prevention and links to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The PCC noted the data from the Board and noted the amazing work of all in helping to prevent suicides.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

6 Complaints Update

The Panel considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided an update on complaints relating to the PCC or the Deputy PCC (for copy see file of Minutes).

It was noted that the last report the Panel received in relation to complaints was at its meeting on 21 September, with one further complaint received since that meeting. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services noted the complaint would be dealt with via the usual procedure under Part B of the agenda.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services noted a complaint had been received in October wishing to escalate a complaint relating to an operational matter. It was noted it fell outside of the scope of the Panel and, after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, the complainant was informed their complaint was outside of the scope of the Panel.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services noted she had responded to a request to meet with Chair, outlining the remit of the Panel.

Councillor L Hovvels noted there was a lack of understanding by some of the role of the Panel and noted there may be benefit in improved communications in that regard.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 Police and Crime Panel Work Programme Priorities

The Panel considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided an update on the work programme priorities for the Police and Crime Panel (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services noted the Panel had agreed its work programme at the June meeting, however, it was intended to be flexible so that matters could be added throughout the course of the year. She noted that where items are added to the work programme, it can impact on the capacity to deliver existing items on the work programme and make agendas very weighty. Specifically, there were a number of matters the Panel had requested to come to the next meeting which necessitated a review of the work programme. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services noted that such matters included the former telecommunications mast, external scrutiny review and latest FMICFRS report. She noted the issue raised in terms of a breakdown of the statistics relating to violent crime, which had been requested under Item 5.

The PCC noted she could provide a breakdown of the statistics to be circulated via e-mail to the Panel. The Chair asked if R Rodiss would be acceptable to information to be provided via e-mail, he agreed. R Rodiss noted the issue in respect of the former telecommunications mast, being Grade 2 Listed. He added he did not feel the HMICFRS report should not be considered separately, and the new Chief Constable should attend to explain the drop in the overall rating. The Chief of Staff, OPCC, Andrea Petty noted the issue had been raised with the Chief Constable.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services noted that the meeting on 1 February would be looking at the PCC's Precept and noted the Panel may wish to schedule an additional special meeting if they felt necessary in terms of the HMICFRS report. The Chair noted the report referred to a lot of business for the 1 February meeting and she felt an additional special meeting would be beneficial in terms of managing the items.

The Vice-Chair agreed. Councillor R Potts noted he also agreed, with a few items to be listed for each meeting. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services noted that the items listed in red within the report could be added to a special meeting, with a date to be decided. The PCC noted that information relating to the HMICFRS report could be provided to put the Durham rating in the context of other Forces and the new inspection regime. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that Members would be contacted as regards a special meeting date after consultation with the Chair/Vice-Chair and OPCC.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That a special meeting be added to the diary of meetings for the Panel.

8 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

9 Complaint against the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Panel considered a report of the Monitoring Officer and Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel in relation to a complaint against the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Panel resolved not to publish the outcome of the complaint.