

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 **Tuesday 16 April 2024** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor P Heaviside (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors V Andrews, P Atkinson, R Crute, C Hampson, C Lines, L Maddison, D Nicholls, R Potts, J Quinn, D Sutton-Lloyd, E Peeke (substitute for M Currah), L Hovvels (substitute for J Miller) and L Brown (substitute for A Simpson)

Co-opted Employees/Officers:

Chief Fire Officer S Helps and Superintendent N Bickford

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Charlton, D McKenna, E Mavin, Mr D Balls and Mrs A Paterson.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor L Hovvels substituted for Councillor J Miller, Councillor L Brown substituted for Councillor A Simpson and Councillor E Peeke substituted for Councillor M Currah.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

C Luery confirmed that the comments raised by Committee in respect of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) had been sent to the Fire Authority as a formal response in accordance with the consultation deadline.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillor R Potts declared that he was a candidate for the Police and Crime Commissioners election that was to take place in May 2024.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members of Interested Parties.

6 Draft Safe Durham Partnership Strategy 2024-29

The Committee received a report and presentation of the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change that presented the draft Safe Durham Partnership Strategy (SDPS) 2024-29 for comments. A copy of the strategy had already been shared with the Committee as part of the wider consultation exercise (for copy see file of minutes).

The Interim Strategic Manager – Partnerships gave a detailed presentation that explained that Community Safety Partnerships had been established 25 years ago to bring local partners together to formulate strategies to tackle local crime and disorder in key priority areas. She noted that a lot had happened in those years around legislation and guidance from Government to drive this work forward. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 it required responsible authorities to meet the statutory obligations collectively under the Community Safety Partnership, this was known as the Safe Durham Partnership in Durham. She noted that Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) had also been established 13 years ago by legislation that brought together a range of partners within community safety.

The Interim Strategic Manager – Partnerships gave an overview of crime and community safety in County Durham and the priorities for the Safe Durham Partnership of anti-social behaviour, hate crime and sexual violence. The strategy also noted assurance areas, for work undertaken by a range of partnerships including Counter-terrorism, the organised crime group and the Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Strategic Partnership. The strategy had been reviewed based on evidence through the strategic needs assessment and developed by the multiagency Strategy Development Group that encompassed the PCC, police, probation, Durham County Council and reflected membership of the organisations within the Safe Durham Partnership. The strategy looked at where differences could be made, what worked well, accountability and included work that was already happening within the partnership. Figures showed that 55,000 crimes had been reported in the 12 months up to the end of September 2023, a rise of 21% between 2021 and 2023 with two in five being violent crimes against the person. Crime rates (2023) are lower in County Durham than the North East but were higher than England.

The key ambition for the Safe Durham Partnership was that Durham was a county where everyone could feel and be safe. The strategy looked at areas of focus and championed areas that required further support. The strategy provided areas of assurance and recognised that partnership working worked well and provided escalation routes for the Safe Durham Partnership. The strategy was underpinned by key actions and approaches of supporting victims of crime, prevention and early intervention of crime, increased public confidence within the service to enable more people to report crime and the expansion of partnership working.

The Interim Strategic Manager – Partnerships informed the committee that there had been a consultation on the DCC website that asked if the priorities reflected what members experienced locally and if there were any gaps to the strategic response to community safety. This had now closed but would be extended by a week to include any comments from the committee. The proposed final strategy would be presented to the Safe Durham Partnership in May 2024 for final agreement.

Councillor L Hovvels felt that this was an important document that brought partners to the table as this work could not be carried out in isolation. She hoped that comments from the voluntary and community sectors would also be pursued and included in the strategy. She knew priorities in her division and commented that priorities differed across the County as one size did not fit all. She had seen change in crime in communities with less people coming forward to report incidents as they thought if they closed the door it would go away.

Councillor V Andrews queried how many hospital admissions there were in relation to violence and sexual violence offences. She asked if these admissions were broken down for figures relating to sexual violence hospital admissions.

The Interim Strategic Manager – Partnerships did not have the information at hand and agreed to feed back to committee.

Councillor D Sutton-Lloyd stated that it was vital that there was as much feedback from Councillors as possible. Councillors should also encourage residents to report incidents. There was a need for a strategy to show what was happening but more weight was needed to be applied to what councillors said.

Councillor C Lines commented positively that it was important for a partner model to be developed. He gave an example of a creative project that was being run by Sedgefield Town Council with young people to tackle youth ASB in the East of Durham that included Horden and Sedgefield. Time was spent in the community to address the issues of ASB and why young people gathered and caused issues. He stressed the need to not stigmatise all young people. He found the most interested element was the partnership approached to identify the issue and deal with it on the ground which had made a huge difference. The Town Council were looking to work out what the next steps were and what to do over the summer to sustain the work.

The Interim Strategic Manager – Partnerships agreed that local groundwork was important to look at hotspots across the County.

Councillor C Lines said it was really important to go out to Town and Parish Councils to get out and experience what was happening in their areas as DCC and the police had made an effort to get out and explain what they were doing to understand the community and experience what affects it had.

Councillor D Sutton-Lloyd found it helpful to report progress. He commented that his division had suffered from ASB for 12-14 years and he had been determined to get a task force developed to tackle it. He felt that it was finally getting there and making a difference. He thought there needed to be more of it.

Councillor D Nicholls thanked the Interim Strategic Manager – Partnerships for the presentation. He was saddened that there was a need to include hate crime but it was necessary to be focused on. He had witnessed it in his community. He stressed that sometimes Councillors needed to put their heads above the parapet when trying to deal with these issues. He felt that the issue could only be tackled collectively. He was glad that hate crime had been included in the plan as the community had become more diverse and people needed to feel safe and secure.

Councillor L Maddison stated that in her area there were a lot of off-road bikes that caused a nuisance in town and in the wooded areas. She noted that her area had received funding to try to develop and improve the area but these people ignored requests to stop and the bikes churned up the paths and left mud tracks destroying all the good work done to date. She asked if the police had the facility to put up notices in the area to warn people that if they continued to use their bikes they could be confiscated or if police could be in attendance to stop the bikes destroying the area. She queried what input there was to have housing associations or private landlords in the Spennymoor area deal with ASB around dilapidated garages where young people hung around and caused mischief. She asked if DCC officers got reports regarding Housing Associations where people climbed on roofs of redundant garages and destroyed the properties that created an area where people did not feel safe.

The Head of Community Protection Services replied to Councillor L Maddison that the police had a team that responded to off-road bikes. She was unsure about the signage request. She agreed to come back with a link about the off-road bikes. She confirmed that work was being undertaken to liaise with housing associations on ASB but not so much with private landlords as this had proved difficult but was on the agenda to pursue. Reports were received by the Council and data was shared across the sectors to deal with the issues that were raised.

Councillor L Hovvels reiterated that she also had ongoing issues with off-road bikes in her ward where most Sundays were plagued by them. She added that signs had been put up in her division but they gave no authority to pursue the offenders. She was saddened by how much criminal damage they caused with a cost to the Council to repair. She queried how much time and resources was spent to address the problem by partner agencies. She had used some of her neighbourhood budget to target hardening schemes to prevent ASB in the community but that had been a cost to her as a Member. She felt that all the money spent was a drain on the Council's finances. Her biggest issue was the destruction of the football pitch in Ludworth that had been turned over and could not be used by the community that she was tired of putting right.

Councillor P Heaviside confirmed that he also had the same issue in his ward and work was being carried out with garages who refused to sell fuel to children and young adults to slow them down.

The Head of Community Protection Services responded that this was a priority and she would take back to the steering group where they could focus on scanning to see where the hotspots were.

Councillor R Crute agreed with Councillor D Nicholls regarding hate crime. He asked how hate crime was reported and monitored, especially on social media. He also asked if there was a clear definition of what a hate crime was. He queried whether hate crime was differentiated between types of hate crime eg religious hate crime.

The Head of Community Protection Services thought that all hate crime was included in the reports that the police pulled together via their reporting system that was shared in order for the data to be focused on.

Superintendent N Bickford noted that as a co-opted member of the committee he had insight into these issues. He stated that off-road bikes were horrifically difficult to tackle. The police had tried everything they could think of to try to combat the issue. He understood how frustrating and devastating it was when land was destroyed by the riders. He himself had the football pitch in his area ruined where the community suffered as the land was then not fit for purpose. He was open to the challenge if anyone could propose any ways to resolve the matter to let him know. The main issue was down to some residents and parents who bought the bikes and facilitated the use of them. He was unsure on how much resources or costs were involved in dealing with the situation but was happy to report back to the next meeting or present on the topic at a future meeting. He confirmed that all hate crime was included in reporting that came to the board and that the Head of Community Protection Services was privy to the information. He gave the same offer for his to attend and present at this forum on behalf of the police on this topic. He acknowledged that there was a lot of hate crime being reported at present resulting from the situation with the Israel – Gaza war and thought it would no doubt get more fractious around the general election.

Councillor P Heaviside agreed that was why Superintendent N Bickford was a co-opted member to provide good firsthand information.

Superintendent N Bickford asked to be emailed as to what the committee would like reported back on.

Councillor R Crute thanked Superintendent N Bickford for his update and his offer to provide presentations in the future. He agreed this could be aligned with the new work plan for the committee going forward as hate crime would not go away. He felt that social media platforms like Facebook were a trigger for hate crime and when responded to created even more hate crime. He agreed these offers should be included into the programme for the coming year.

Councillor C Lines confirmed that some Housing Associations like Livin had key projects that referred to hate crime.

Councillor L Maddison asked if there was any information on finances or officers that were trained for drone usage that could be used in areas to target issues.

Superintendent N Bickford did not have figures on finances but agreed to feed back to the Committee. He confirmed that there were officers trained in each locality within the neighbourhood teams to use drones.

Councillor P Atkinson thanked the Interim Strategic Manager – Partnerships for the presentation. He informed the committee that he had installed a police app on his phone that showed the levels of crime in different areas that he used when attending the PACT meetings. He had found by far that ASB and violent crime were on the rise.

Councillor P Heaviside thanked the Interim Strategic Manager – Partnerships for an informative presentation.

Resolved:

- i) That the report and presentation be noted.
- ii) That any final comments on the draft SDP Strategy be sent to Julie Bradbrook by 23 April 2024.

7 Road Safety

The Chair agreed to defer this item until a future meeting as due to staff illness there was no one in attendance to present the report.

8 Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Strategic Group Update - ASB Delivery Plan 2024-2025

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change that provided an update on the ongoing work of the ASB Strategic Group that included the final draft ASB Delivery Plan 2024-2025 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Community Protection Services gave a presentation that detailed the key actions for the ASB Strategic Group for the year. The ASB Strategy had been published and the ASB Strategic Group were to develop an action plan for the Safer Durham Board. She explained what work had been carried out since the last update to committee. Further work had been carried out on the Theory of Change (ToC) document and had been shared with members of the committee that highlighted the key action areas. The final report had been submitted to the Partnership Board in March 2024 and would be implemented in April 2024.

The Head of Community Protection Services remarked how the plan fit in with the overarching three key priority areas that were signed off after the consultation ended but was subject to change. The main priority was focused on ASB with eight principles - working in Partnership; champion the victims' voice; provide the best victim support; provide victim centric community trigger and community remedy processes; implement preventative measures; to make full use of the tools and powers and maximise use of digital technologies. The action plan concentrated on partnerships, people and places. The rationale was shared at the last meeting to create quick wins at low cost that had high impact. There were time limited projects that included safe street that was a trail blazer led by the PCC that was not in the delivery plan. The focus was to strengthen partnership working at a local level that was important to meet the demands in an area that differed across the County. Further work was required on the management framework to improve data sharing to develop dash boards. Sharing information was important but all data bases were different so there was talk of creating one system but that was limited due to resources.

The Head of Community Protection Services stated that work was to be carried out to establish how much partners spent to address ASB and what the return was on the investment as there was a need to understand the costs to the agency and evaluate them. There was a requirement to limit court time as that was evidence based that needed lots of lead in time which could potentially result in the case not going to court. Work was ongoing to ensure that partners had the right information and knowledge to sign post to the right people that would involve the development of training materials for joint working. There was work being carried out around public space protection orders as these also had to be started early to gather evidence. The Case Review System had been worked on for the last 12 months to capture feedback from victims to co-produce solutions. Working with victims was important as their experience was a way forward to learn and shape the services in the future. She added that work was to be developed with the community to produce a community charter to illustrate what was acceptable and what was not acceptable in an area to reduce community tolerance and increase the social norm for people to report incidents.

The Head of Community Protection Services explained that ASB overlapped with other strategies and work was ongoing to see how often low level crime escalated to more serious crime and dove tail work from the ASB side with an annual delivery plan although this was not set in stone and was continuously reviewed. There was a proposal to present to the Board every six months as the information was more tangible. It was also proposed to report to committee every six months rather than quarterly but the committee would still receive updates within the quarterly performance report.

Councillor D Sutton-Lloyd thanked the Head of Community Protection Services for the presentation. He was interested in the community charter as there needed to be a game plan on how to engage with people.

Councillor L Hovvels also thanked the Head of Community Protection Services for the presentation that included a lot of information. She referred to the collection of data using other methods like CCTV. She queried if this was to advance to obtain mobile cameras and how progress would be made to broaden out the scheme. She thought this would help partners in doing their jobs and make community safer in hot spot areas.

The Head of Community Protection Services responded that CCTV was in the action plan and work was ongoing for a trail blazer with Police and Crime Commissioners Office. She confirmed that CCTV's had been identified and resources had not. There were two arms to this work - mobile CCTV work that was ongoing and the upgrading of existing CCTV cameras. Work was also ongoing to identify where there were voids not covered by CCTV.

Councillor R Crute noted that Durham had mechanisms to report ASB but noted that there had been 280 reports in 10 months that were not from Durham County Council. He queried if there were any Government mechanisms to trigger a response from the service to ASB reported incidents as he was unsure how these things worked and how far police development showed on a heat map.

The Head of Community Protection Services confirmed that there was independent organisational monitoring of ASB incidents especially with repeat offences. There was a review trigger threshold that had worked last year to ensure responses were sent from the service. She added that there were case reviews that brought partners round table to create a level of response that was positive. From her service they took a business as usual approach and monitored where incidents came in from or if something was too difficult an existing trigger threshold was in place.

Resolved:

- i) That the report be noted.
- ii) That the proposed arrangements for receiving ASB update reports and performance management reports from April 2024 be agreed

9 Quarter Three, 2023/24 Performance Management Report

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive that presented an overview of progress towards delivery of the key priorities within the Council Plan 2023-27 in line with the council's corporate performance framework and covered performance in and to the end of quarter three, 2023/24, October to December 2023 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager reviewed the key highlights of the report. He noted that 43% of properties had been identified to be licensed under the Selective Licensing Programme. The increase had been helped by the Council pursuing legal action against those who had not taken out a licence. There were 142 enforcement cases started to be processed for action. Road safety fatalities had risen in quarter three with 21 fatalities this year that had been the highest in seven years. This figure may increase in quarter four. Road safety partners continued to engineer where accidents took place and analysed the area looking at the roads, signage, road markings, provided education to young drivers and carried out enforcement where necessary. Crime figures had been covered under agenda item 6 that were lower regionally but higher than England. The chart showed County Durham as being the 4th lowest in the northeast compared to the eleven local authorities. Theft offences had risen that included theft of a motor vehicle. This was on the increase due to the rise in inflation by 30% and the items being attractive for thieves to steal. Shoplifting was also on the rise.

He added that protection of vulnerable people had three elements i) fewer domestic abuse incidents were reported but more victims were referred to Harbour Support Services, ii) status satisfactory with Harbour had improved since using it; iii) clients felt safe and children and young people report felt safe following intervention. Historically figures for ASB had decreased but in Quarter three there had been a slight uptake. Environmental ASB that had been far higher in volume had come down mainly due to the way in which the police recorded incidents as some incidents were no longer categorised as crime. In the national survey for England and Wales a quarter of responses stated that they were satisfied on how police dealt with matters but the survey could be subject to sampling error as it has not changed in the last three years. The main areas of concern were speeding, ASB, negative police behaviour and off-road bikes. He noted that the report included information of the CAT team in the Head of Community Protection Services team and Horden together.

Councillor R Crute was aware that he had raised his concerns with the slow up take on the licences through the Selective Licensing Programme. He noted that the scheme had only increased by 6% and it was now halfway through the scheme and there would not be sufficient premises licensed within the time left. He raised concerns regarding the ceasing of prosecution of landlords and the instatement of financial penalties instead. He had one prosecution in his area that had been a £7023 deterrent.

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager responded that things were decided on a case by case basis. The use of financial penalties sped up the process for landlords to apply for a licence as if they paid early they got a discount. However this seemed to only work with responsible landlords especially those with fewer properties in their portfolios who would feel the financial pinch of a penalty compared to larger companies who would not feel the affect. There was also the disadvantage for absentee landlords. He added that it was a slow and frustrating process but the scheme was not designed to make money but carried out to improve the standard of properties.

Councillor R Crute suspected it was difficult to get in contact with absentee landlord. He asked if the financial penalties came back into the service.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that there was to be a bespoke Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22 April 2024 where the Selective Licensing Programme was the first agenda item. This would be an opportunity for members to take part in the discussion and ask questions of the officers who ran the scheme.

The Head of Community Protection Services responded to Councillor R Crute that the income obtained from civil penalties went to further finance the same activities. She used civil penalties in other services within her remit like Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) as an alternative to prosecution in court as this tied up a lot of time and penalties in court went to a tribunal. It was a useful tool to use. She added that her report had included the work undertaken with HMO licences and other housing interested legislation.

Councillor J Quinn shared Councillor R Crute's concerns with the Selective Licensing programme issues. He thought it was good that more landlords had signed up but it was a long process and the scheme was nearly at the end with some landlords having had to pay up which no doubt these costs had been passed on to the tenants. He asked if ASB recording continued to cause issues.

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager noted that the selective licensing programme had invested in an IT system that had the ability to record ASB issues. It was found to be difficult to generalise as there had been a glitch in the system that prohibited gaining any measures as to how well things were being reported. This had been raised with internal audit but it was frustrating as there would be no way to prove or disprove if selective licensing had been successful until after it had finished when the system was run at the end.

Councillor J Quinn queried how much the IT system had cost to install, why it was not operating efficiently and who had commissioned it.

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager was unsure but agreed to feedback to the committee.

Councillor D Nicholls thanked the Corporate Policy and Performance Manager for the report. He felt that it was significantly important to regard suicide rates. He noticed that had been a rise since 2018 but stated that people were not statistics. It was reported that Durham was 6% higher than the national average and 3% higher than compared to other areas in the Northeast which was a problem that may appear not to be tackled. He felt that the system was stagnant and that this area should be flagged as potentially figures would increase in the quarter four report that was still to come. He stated that the Public Health Committee should be mindful on what was going on to make every effort to reduce these figures. He suggested that the Council could sign up to the MIND employability charter.

Councillor L Brown referred to the approximate figure of 29,000 properties within selective licensing programme and was concerned that the Council did not know exactly how many rented properties there were in these areas.

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager responded that the report stated that the number of properties was an approximation as there was a lot of different data that was analysed that ranged from council tax, benefits and estate agents to establish the number of landlords there were in these areas which fluctuated. He added that landlords might not have been identified yet so the figures were as accurate as they could be.

Councillor D Sutton-Lloyd hoped that the scrutiny meeting on 22 April 2024 would provide Members with further details on the selection licensing scheme that was long overdue.

Councillor R Crute understood the use of ballpark performance figures as it was unclear what exemptions may come to light within the system that would result in landlords not falling in with the criteria of the scheme.

Resolved:

That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter three performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge be noted.

10 Probation Service

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Resources that provided a background to the probation services in County Durham (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Probation Services for County Durham and Darlington gave a presentation that outlined the plan and key priorities for the probation service for the year and provided an update on performance. She noted there was an issue with homelessness where there was a challenge to house offenders when they left custody or for those already supervised in the community on a community-based sentence. The objectives for the Probation Service was to protect the public and reduce reoffending. This was difficult to manage if offenders were not housed as officers did not know where they resided. Assessments were carried out on offenders before being released to manage the risks. Recruitment and retention of staff was also an issue as there was a real need to improve staffing within the service as there had been a lot of experience lost over the years when more experienced staff had moved on.

The Head of Probation Services for County Durham and Darlington advised that there were 21 beds in the probation funded Community Accommodation Scheme 3 for housing provision with 17 of these being live. The housing issue was not just a challenge in Durham but was a national issue. Within the service there was a need to ensure that sentences were delivered effectively.

Inspector Norris from Durham Constabulary addressed the committee to inform them that there was a co-lead Integrated Offender Management Scheme with the police and probation service to deliver integrated priorities of the criminal justice board to deal with people as there was a high volume of offenders committing neighbourhood crime that included robbery, theft of a person or vehicle and burglary. The main drivers for offending were mental health issues and issues with alcohol. The probation service ran a bespoke service to encourage desistance from crime. A framework was in place to manage offenders with a spreadsheet that showed information to help apprehend offenders to prevent future offenses and future victims. Offenders were tracked as to who wanted them and establish the average time an offender was wanted to try to get them in custody as soon as possible. A tactical tool kit was used along with phone calls and door knocking going back to basics to arrest people. It was found that sport, football or gym activities diverted people away from re-offending. Evidence showed that people committed offenses as they potentially had undiagnosed ADHD. A screening tool was used that showed if they potentially had ADHD that produced a letter that offenders could then give to their doctor to carry out further testing. This was not a diagnosis for ADHD. Through partnership working this could get people on to the right pathway for a service that could help with their needs. He gave examples of case studies that showed the positive work of the probation service.

Councillor P Atkinson thanked officers for the report. He referred to the report that the service made housing provision for young offenders and asked if there was a list of where accommodation was provided that was available to local councillors for their ward.

The Head of Probation Services for County Durham and Darlington advised that the local authority had contributed to assessment on where CAS3 properties should avoid being located and that Mears held the contract for the northeast to source appropriate accommodation. There were sensitivities on where potential accommodation for offenders were located therefore the information was not available to local councillors for their wards.

Councillor P Atkinson asked if information about offenders was stored with the local police.

The Head of Probation Services for County Durham and Darlington advised that there was good joint working with the police to manage people under supervision.

Councillor D Sutton Lloyd questioned how offenders were allocated housing when they came out of custody if there were only 21 beds and what was the rational between supply and demand for housing.

The Head of Probation Services for County Durham and Darlington advised that the CAS 3 probation-funded provision was additional to what was offered by the Local Authority or other housing providers which would be expected to provide housing support to those in need. There was a huge demand for housing compared to supply and acknowledged this was a challenge for all concerned. She added that the 21 beds were reserved for the most needy so that risk could be managed effectively. She said many years ago, community service projects involved offenders working to make difficult to let properties habitable, and part of the arrangement, in another local authority area, saw those offenders who had worked on the properties given a tenancy; however this had discontinued some time ago as local authorities no longer had the housing stock as before. She confirmed that she was due to meet with police and the new housing strategic lead for Durham to refresh the Housing Offenders Group.

Councillor L Hovvels thanked officers for the information. She thought that it was not good practice to rehouse offenders in hotspot areas. The locations should be managed and queried how much work was implemented to scan the area for criminal activity before housing someone in a certain location.

The Head of Probation Services for County Durham and Darlington responded that whilst there was ongoing work with the police to provide environmental scans, it was sometimes Hobson's choice. There may be a need to place offenders where properties were available, efforts were made by police and probation and others as appropriate to manage the risk and that location might not be ideal but the alternative may be that an offender was homeless and it was better to know where people were living to manage the risk. Also if a person was housed it was easier for them to engage with the probation service and other services to help reduce their risk of reoffending.

Councillor L Hovvels realised that this was not the answer but the service had to help the individual.

The Head of Probation Services for County Durham and Darlington agreed having offenders living in hot spots was not ideal and was open to any ideas that members had to try to tackle the issue.

Councillor L Hovvels suggested using local intelligence and using the police to identify problem areas.

The Head of Probation Services for County Durham and Darlington replied that probation worked hand in glove with the police especially the neighbourhood policing teams and that we have worked well to establish good police probation management links at a local level. Upon listening to Members at the meeting she envisioned the offenders could help within the Clean and Green teams to help keep areas nice and repair football fields that would benefit the local community.

Councillor L Hovvels stated that work to repair football fields would be at a Director's level to arrange within the Council.

The Head of Probation Services for County Durham and Darlington mentioned that there was an excellent unpaid work site in Durham, with polytunnels with the produce grown taken to local food banks as part of the unpaid work scheme.

Councillor L Hovvels was aware of some of the schemes as she used to buy the wreaths at Christmas time from the probation service.

Councillor D Nicholls stated that neurodivergence was important. He was concerned with the screening process as generally there was a four-year waiting list and young people missed out on their entire education as often they were not on the right medication. Anything to improve the service may not be in this committee's remit to show an impact on the probation service.

The Head of Probation Services for County Durham and Darlington stated that the service recognised as part of its ongoing commitment to delivering equality of practice and that there were potentially more undiagnosed people within offender cohorts with neurodivergence efforts were being taken to look at the best way to work with people with neurodiversity considerations.

Inspector Norris from Durham Constabulary stressed that the assessment was not a diagnosis merely a suggestion that offenders required additional support.

Councillor C Lines suggested that officers should be careful with the words they used regarding the letter forming a diagnosis for ADHD and how it could set people on the path for further help through their GP as that was not how the system worked. He mentioned that his wife had been diagnosed with ADHD through the charity ADHD Foundation and their GP would not accept the letter as evidence of her diagnosis. GP's tended to dismiss charities and the work that they did.

Inspector Norris from Durham Constabulary reiterated that the letter was not a diagnosis but a forward to help offenders to have a conversation with health professionals and show that offenders may benefit from further assessment. It was a starting point to offer pathway into the system as four years was too long to wait. It was early days and needed time to develop.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

11 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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

12 Probation Service

The Committee received a further presentation of the Corporate Director of Resources that provided a background to the probation services in County Durham (for copy see file of minutes) and which included information in respect of staffing levels and performance data.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted