

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 3 December 2013** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, P Conway, J Gray, C Hampson, B Harrison, M Hodgson, J Measor, K Shaw, P Stradling, J Turnbull and C Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr A J Cooke, Mr B Knevitt and Mr T Thompson

Co-opted Employees/Officers:

Mrs H Raine, Chief Superintendent G Hall and Mr J Hewitt

Also Present:

Councillor L Howvels

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Cordon, S Forster, T Nearney and Mr M Iveson.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held 18 October 2013 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillors M Hodgson, K Shaw and J Turnbull declared an interest in Item 7 as a Member of the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority. Mr J Hewitt declared an interest in Item 7 as an Officer of the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

Mr J Hewitt, Co-opted Member and Deputy Chief Executive, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority had submitted a report, set out at Item 7, relating to the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014/15.

6 Media Relations

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee referred Members to the recent prominent articles and news stories relating to the remit of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes). The articles related a 2 day conference being hosted by BALANCE and the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) on the future of work to reduce the harm caused by alcohol; the annual Police campaign against drinking and driving; and praise for Firefighters from the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service in tackling a blaze at Stanley, ensuring the safety of a nearby primary school.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2014/15 Consultation

The Chairman introduced the Deputy Chief Executive, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS), John Hewitt who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2014/15 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Deputy Chief Executive, CDDFRS thanked Members for the opportunity to give an update on the IRMP and noted that the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) would consider the IRMP on 11 December 2013, and that Overview and Scrutiny Members' comments would be sought formally after this date.

Members were reminded that the IRMP was a national process implemented locally, the plan being in place for 3 years and progress being monitored annually. Councillors noted that the IRMP looked at assessing risk to people and property, strategies to reduce fires and road traffic accidents, and the efficient use of resources. The Deputy Chief Executive, CDDFRS reminded the Committee that Fire and Rescue Services nationally, 46 currently, were facing reduced budgets as a result of government spending reductions within the public sector, similar to Councils and other public bodies. It was explained that while significant savings and efficiencies had been achieved, it was sustaining the level of services on the basis of further cuts in the medium and long term that will prove difficult given the relative efficiency of the Service. Councillors noted that locally, there was a Community Safety Strategy 2010/11 – 2014/15 aligned with Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) together with 1 year action plans.

The Committee noted several changes and achievements that had been made including: improvement in staff capacity; new demand led crewing systems being instigated in Newton Aycliffe and Seaham; reduced crewing on multi pump station; mixed crewing of whole-time and retained duty system staff; responding to small fires using smaller fire appliances; a 25% reduction in back office staff; and investment in new Community Fire Stations. The Deputy Chief Executive, CDDFRS noted that the 2014/15 IRMP was more of a “take stock” position, with 2015/16 onward being where the major challenges would be faced.

Members noted slides showing statistics relating to performance with accidental house fires and non-commercial property fires having continuing to reduce year-on-year. Performance as regards fire deaths was noted to fluctuate and the current year-to-date figure of zero did not include 4 fire deaths that had yet to be confirmed by the Coroner. Members learned that the number of home fire safety visits, year-to-date, was below the number carried out the previous year, however, utilising staff effectively should mean that by the year-end 2013/14, the number carried out would represent an increase upon those carried out in 2012/13.

The Deputy Chief Executive, CDDFRS reiterated that 2014/15 represented the final year of the current strategy and that focus had been made on changes to delivering services to maintain levels of service, including community safety activities. Councillors noted specific consultation as regards collaboration, 12 week consultation that would commence, subject to approval by the CFA on 11 December, and end 1 March 2014. It was noted this would include issues such as collaboration opportunities with Councils, Police and Ambulance, and that the Committee would be contacted in this regard, as well as the usual consultation with Area Action Partnerships (AAPs), Town and Parish Councils, the voluntary sector and other partners.

The Committee noted that by 2017/18, there could potentially be a requirement to make additional savings of £3m to £4million from a budget of £30 million, this being in the context of back office and non-operation savings already being achieved. The recommendations from the Knight Review mirroring the steps already undertaken by CDDFRS. The Deputy Chief Executive, CDDFRS added that if cuts were to continue to then the CDDFRS could change considerably from its current form and that issues in relation to governance, mergers and council tax options would need to be considered.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Chief Executive, CDDFRS and asked Members for their questions.

Members asked questions in relation to: any increased risk as a result of amended shift patterns; challenges in maintaining levels of community safety work; consultation with partners and partnership working; the viability of PCCs being able to take on responsibility for FRSs and Ambulance Services on top of existing Police responsibilities; correlation between the number of home safety visits and fire deaths; and collaboration with the Ambulance Service and whether this could negatively impact upon the FRS fire response role.

The Deputy Chief Executive, CDDFRS explained that response standards had remained the same with the implementation of amended shift patterns and that feedback from the public as regards the quality of service was very good.

Chief Superintendent G Hall noted that as a member of the Urgent Care Board the forward looking approach of the CDDFRS was very positive and noted the support to the Ambulance Service from the Fire Service, with income generation being important. The Deputy Chief Executive, CDDFRS thanked Police colleagues in helping to push this agenda forward and noted that there would be discussions with colleagues from the Ambulance Service as regards what was known as “co-responding”. It was noted that this would be taken forward in future in line with Government timescales, noting a response to the Knight Review from the Government was due by the end of the month.

The Deputy Chief Executive, CDDFRS explained that depending upon information from Government, there may be several options available for Fire Authorities going forward in respect of partnership working, such as the Ambulance Service commissioning the CFA in respect of co-responding, as well as potential for closer working with Local Authorities in respect of shared estate and back office provision as well as grouping together in respect of funding bids to Government. It was added that there would be many challenges for all areas of the public sector and it would be a case of agencies working to manage risks.

Members were asked to note that national research had shown that there were types of individuals that were at greater risk of fire death and that it was part of the work undertaken with partners in targeting those individuals to help prevent fire deaths. The Deputy Chief Executive, CDDFRS noted that within all of the savings that were being undertaken, there was always the need to balance against any increase in risk, and it was noted that current performance as reported showed that the high response standards were being maintained at this time.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report and presentation on the IRMP 2014/15 consultation be noted.
- (ii) That feedback be provided to the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service on the IRMP 2014/15 in due course.

8 Safe Durham Partnership - Integrated Restorative Practice Strategy

The Chairman introduced the Strategic Manager, County Durham Youth Offending Service, Gill Eshelby who was in attendance to speak to Members, in her role as the SDP's Strategic Lead for Restorative Practice, on the Safe Durham Partnership's (SDP) Integrated Restorative Practice Strategy (IRPS) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager, CDYOS reminded Members that she had last spoken to the Committee on the issue of Restorative Approaches in April 2013 and noted that some Members of the Scrutiny Panel and Police and Crime Panel (PCP) had recently received Level 1 training from Durham Constabulary. Members were informed of the work that had been ongoing in respect the IRPS, including the types of approaches undertaken.

Councillors noted the “journey so far” in respect of Restorative Approaches, with the SDP forming an IRP Strategy Group, with the Strategic Manager, CDYOS as the strategic lead. The Group developed the IRPS and Action Plan to integrate restorative practice across identified work streams of multi-agency work, while being cost neutral to services.

The Committee noted there had been significant work undertaken in respect of restorative approaches including:

- Restorative Neighbourhoods – community members
- Restorative Communities:
 - Children and Families
 - Looked after Children / Schools
 - Police
- Restorative Justice:
 - CDYOS
 - Restorative Approaches for Prolific and Priority Offenders (RAPPO)
 - HMP Durham / Integrated Offender Management (IOM)
 - Durham Tees Valley Probation Trust / National Offender Management Service (NOMS) projects

Councillors learned that in respect of improving outcomes, victim involvement and their journey/experience was important, as well as developing shared understanding and increasing public confidence. Members noted there was a need to improve feedback to victims as regards indirect reparation/community reparation and that value for money was important, especially in the current financial climate.

The Strategic Manager, CDYOS explained that a Training Champions group had been established; and that training and development had involved building capacity and capability within a zero budget environment, a credit to all involved. A group of staff are trained as RA trainers. It was added that multi-agency partnership work in respect of training had included staff from CDYOS and former Children's Care, now part of Children's Services, Children and Adults Services (CAS), working with Durham Constabulary to deliver some Restorative Approaches training. Members were advised that there would be a Good Practice event held on 14 January 2014 that would highlight the range of work in Co Durham; share good practice / learning; and encourage greater involvement. It was noted that the event was multi-agency funded and that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Chief Constable and Corporate Director of CAS would all be in attendance. It was added that there were 140 places at the event and that Members of Scrutiny were welcome to attend.

The Committee noted that in the current era of funding reductions, it was not likely that any bespoke performance management arrangements / system would be possible. It may be possible to use Red Sigma / Blue Delta system as used by Durham Constabulary. It was explained that the IRP Group were completing a draft self-assessment that measured partnership work against the Restorative Justice Council's (RJC) Restorative Services Standards – this is work in progress. It was noted that the County was listed as a "Restorative County", under the SDP banner, on the RJC website, identifying several services. It was explained that there was still an issue of building capacity and capability across services; and the need to maintain values and integrity, raise public awareness of restorative approaches, increase victim participation, and maintain good practice.

It was explained that future plans included: a bid for a Restorative Practice Coordinator, to further involve volunteer community members, ensure pathways/capacity across communities; and also to achieve RJC accreditation. Councillors noted that, as expected, there would be work to continue to reduce offending and re-offending, increase public confidence and to improve the victims' experience of the restorative approaches route.

The Strategic Manager, CDYOS noted that the vision for the future was for: County Durham to be a restorative county: restorative approaches being embedded into “the day job” as part of everyone’s business / everyone’s practice; this to lead to fewer crimes and fewer victims; and for an “Altogether Restorative” approach to be the norm.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Manager, CDYOS and asked Members for their questions.

Members of the Committee asked questions in relation to: what lessons had been learned from the Neighbourhood Justice pilot schemes in County Durham; whether AAP representatives had been invited to the Good Practice event in January; and whether there were any risks involved with the delivery of restorative approaches.

The Strategic Manager, CDYOS explained that the two Neighbourhood Pilots in had shown the importance of management to maximise the use of community volunteers. Because of the size of Co. Durham, the IRP Steering Group suggested that extension of the current model countywide would not be cost effective as it could cost in the region of £300,000 - £500,000. The proposal for a countywide Restorative Practice Coordinator role would ensure that the approach would be sustainable as well as provide value for money. It was also explained that the CDYOS had Investors in Volunteers status and therefore they would be able to help get more volunteers involved from local communities.

The Strategic Manager, CDYOS noted she would ensure AAP Coordinators had been given notice of the event in January. Members learned that while there were some risks involved in developing restorative approaches, the Strategic Manager, CDYOS was confident that County Durham would be able to embed the approach going forward. The Reducing Reoffending Manager, H Raine noted that possibly some funding could be available in respect of Restorative Solutions, working alongside the IRP Steering Group, and suggested a further report would be brought back to Committee in this respect in March 2014.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

9 Safe Durham Partnership Strategic Assessment 2013

The Chairman introduced the Community Safety Coordinator, Children and Adults Services, Graham McArdle who was in attendance to speak to Members as regards the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) Strategic Assessment 2013.

The Community Safety Coordinator reminded Members that the SDP was required by statute to develop an annual Strategic Assessment and develop and implement a Partnership Plan.

It was noted that no new significant evidence had come forward that would have warranted a change in the SDP priorities, those being:

- I. Reduce anti-social behaviour
- II. Protect vulnerable people from harm
- III. Reduce reoffending
- IV. Alcohol and substance misuse harm reduction
- V. Embed the Think Family approach
- VI. Counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism
- VII. Casualty reduction

It was noted that the public were consulted on their views through 126 Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings and a PCC survey and these gave issues that the public wished to be tackled including: Anti-social Behaviour (ASB); Underage drinking; Drug dealer and drug users; Speeding vehicles; Dog fouling; Litter and rubbish. Members noted that a number of recommendations had identified smaller pieces of work as set out within the report in the agenda pack.

The Chairman thanked the Community Safety Coordinator and asked Members for their questions.

The Committee asked questions on issues including: whether there was a lag in the effect of increases in crimes; how the recommendations would be monitored and measured as regards their success; the priority of alcohol misuse and drug dealer and drug use, in the context of recent document from the Chief Constable, supported by the PCC; how the actions from the plan would be delivered; and issues of hate crime, not noted within the report.

The Community Safety Coordinator explained that there was a lag in data relating to some issues and therefore it was important to keep monitoring the situation in order to ensure that any apparent trends were in fact trends before prioritising as an issue. Members noted that each recommendation had actions for the SDP Board and they would monitor with and the Community Safety and Involvement Manager, Children and Adults Services, Jeanette Stephenson adding that some of the areas had checks in place in connection with payment by results and further information could be brought to Members in due course.

The Consultant in Public Health, Children and Adults Services, Claire Sullivan explained that for the first time a separate Drug Strategy was to be developed and that a stakeholder event in January 2014 would look at the related issues, Members noted this and were greatly encouraged.

Chief Superintendent G Hall noted that both in Durham and Darlington, with the support of the PCC, there was progress in increasing the knowledge as regards hate crime, how it is reported and engaging with communities to deliver outcomes. It was added that 25 partner organisations were involved and further information could be brought back from their Delivery Group to the Committee in due course.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy - Update

The Chairman introduced the Consultant in Public Health, Children and Adults Services, Claire Sullivan; the Alcohol Harm Reduction Coordinator, Children and Adults Services, Kirsty Wilkinson; and the Research and Information Manager, BALANCE, Neil Martin who were in attendance to speak to Members as regards an update on the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy (AHRS).

The Consultant in Public Health reminded Members that in addition to giving an update to on progress with the AHRS, Councillors had noted concerns relating to the performance indicator regarding the dependent drinking population being removed and this would be explained further.

It was explained that since the last launch of the AHRS there had been significant changes both nationally and locally, most disappointingly the news that Government was not bringing forward any legislation in respect of Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP). Members noted that under the Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011, Early Morning Restrictions Orders (EMROs) and Late Night Levies (LNLs) were introduced to be able to restrict opening hours and to provide remuneration for the policing of the night-time economy. It was explained that the implications of EMROs and LNLs for County Durham were not yet fully understood and they had not been included within the current review of the Licensing Policy.

The Consultant in Public Health reminded Members of the changes in respect of Public Health and the Drug and Alcohol Commissioning Team now being embedded within Durham County Council (DCC) as a consequence of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. It was explained that the commissioning arrangements for Health and Justice, including alcohol, for prison settings had moved from a local level to a regional level through NHS England.

Members noted that the structure of the Alcohol Harm Reduction Group had now shifted to a “task and finish” approach. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Unit (AHRU) would go back and look at how data is recorded, and expected an increase in numbers of alcohol related incidents. It was noted that better data would be useful and issues such as “drunk and disorderly” not being recorded as an alcohol related incident were to be addressed. It was noted that there was a national review of alcohol related hospital admissions targets and the results of which would be released in the next few months.

The Alcohol Harm Reduction Coordinator explained that the Licensing Policy Task and Finish Group were looking at EMROs and LNLs and that a Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) had been established in Peterlee, following the establishment of a CAP in Stanley. Members noted a number of multi-agency operations including test purchased and reviews of licences, with several being resolved by mediation. The Committee learned that there had been a number of diversionary actions being undertaken in the 3 Towns area, including work with the 4Real service, the local community and parents. It was reiterated that proxy provision of alcohol to children, including by their parents, was an area in which a lot of emphasis and work was being undertaken. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Coordinator added that an event was held in Durham Market Place, “Alcohol: What’s the Price” featuring a number of partners and that other activities included an alcohol free band night in Consett and several Stay Safe operations, as witnessed by several Members recently.

Members noted that those young people that had been subject to alcohol seizure were automatically referred to the 4Real service and the Alcohol Seizure Procedure had been a finalist in the Problem Orientated Partnerships Awards around child sexual exploitation. It was added that a “social norms” project had been implemented across the majority of secondary schools within the County and an Alcohol Custody Diversion scheme had begun in November, where those issued with Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) would be offered the opportunity to attend an appropriate training course to receive a reduction in their fine. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Coordinator explained that alcohol related hospital admission had reduced, the first time since 2003.

The Consultant in Public Health explained that the dependent drinking population figures were based upon a synthetic mid-2009 estimate which in turn was from information collected in the 2007 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey findings. Councillors were reminded that these estimates and large confidence intervals. It was noted that while there were figures available from BALANCE as regards the percentage of dependent drinkers in alcohol treatment, this was not a suitable measure either and therefore a new indicator was required. It was noted that a request had been made for GPs to gather the information on alcohol consumption as part of the national GP Contract, though it was unlikely that this could occur until 2015, if at all. Councillors noted that screening for registered GP populations of those 40 years old or older was now routine through “Health Checks” and that if GPs were contracted separately as regards routinely screening the 16-39 year olds this data could provide a better picture of drinking behaviour in County Durham.

The Committee noted that there were performance measures which replaced the percentage of dependent drinkers in treatment include: the number of people in treatment; successful completions; new presentations and re-presentations; and the percentage of all exits from treatment with the Community Alcohol Services that are planned discharges. It was explained that the new indicator was based upon the number of individuals discharged categorised as “successful completions” as a percentage of the total number of individuals who had received a structured intervention at any point within the reporting period.

The Chairman thanked the Consultant in Public Health and Alcohol Harm Reduction Coordinator and asked Members for their questions.

Members asked questions in relation to: the amount of effort in looking at data versus the actions being taken to tackle issues; how figures for County Durham in terms of hospital admissions were defined; definitions of any new indicator, and local information; and where people could be signposted to as a contact to get treatment.

The Research and Information Manager, BALANCE explained that the previous data used was from 2007, and estimates were then made from that data as regards the percentage of the drinking age population that were alcohol dependent. It was added that this data had a large confidence interval and that a lot of other Public Health data was of a better quality. Members noted that it was not mandatory for crime statistics to have each recorded as having alcohol involved. The Research and Information Manager, BALANCE noted that based upon hospital admissions from 2003 to date, there were 47 conditions that had been identified as being “alcohol related” and therefore could be recorded as such. The Consultant in Public Health added that while there is information available in terms of hospital admissions that are alcohol related, this is not the same as having a defined indicator, with some issues being alcohol related, some being alcohol specific.

It was added that as data improves, a new indicator would be developed in respect of dependent drinking, recovery and exits from treatment, however, it would be important for any indicator to be comparable nationally. The Consultant in Public Health noted that there were 22 local indicators also which could be shared with the committee. A successful event recently held at Durham University had launched their first alcohol policy, and those could be shared with Members accordingly.

The Consultant in Public Health noted that the Community Alcohol Services would be an excellent first port of call for anyone seeking help and advice or wishing to enter into treatment, however, acknowledging that individuals cannot be forced into treatment. The Committee were reminded of Alcohol Concern's "Dry January" campaign, which DCC was supporting.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

11 Quarter 2 2013/14 Performance Management Report

The Chairman introduced the Strategic Manager Performance and Information Manager, Children and Adults Services, Keith Forster who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter 2 2013/14 Performance Management Report for the Altogether Safer theme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager Performance and Information Manager referred Members to the report and noted key performance achievements, including reduction of repeat presentations at the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) well below national and regional levels, though this "over performance" may require further investigation. It was noted that the key performance issues included: a slight underperformance in respect of the number of people in drug treatment with the Community Drugs Services, though new properties that would be in use from November 2013 should provide more capacity and help bring the figures back in line with targets; and an increase in the child Road Traffic Accident (RTA) figures, though it was noted that investigations had shown no trends within the data and that there were Road Safety campaigns and schemes such as Junior Road Safety Officers within schools.

The Committee learned that tracker indicators linked to the Altogether Safer theme highlighted an overall increase in crime for Quarter 2 of 4%, with County Durham forecast for the year end being 7%. It was noted that a piece of work was being undertaken with information being brought forward to the Police in January and the SDP Board had asked for work in relation to: the drivers of crime; key areas of concern; rates of new offenders and reoffenders; and the impact of the increase in crime. The Strategic Manager Performance and Information Manager explained that figures for ASB had reduced, though for environmental ASB there had been an increase. The Committee noted the increase in the alcohol related violent crime, though it was added improved recording and the good summer weather had impacted upon those figures. Members learned that there had been a slight improvement in the figure as reported for offenders in Durham that reoffended, 29.2%, therefore in line with the previous year and that issues that would impact such as Welfare Reform may have lag, and the impact may be experienced within the next 18 months.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Manager Performance and Information Manager and asked Members for their questions.

Members noted caution as regards seasonality impacting upon crime figures and a need to understand trends in terms other than numbers and asked questions relating to child RTAs; impact of public sector cuts on performance; and figures relating to suicide rates.

Chief Superintendent G Hall noted that Durham Constabulary were doing all within their power to tackle the issues as set out within the report, and noted that all 27 force areas across the country were experiencing increases in crime, though there was a notable North / South divide nationally. Members learned that there would be a Police Strategic Assessment in January 2014 and issues included the impact of Welfare Reform, the Economy and Public Finances, Criminal Justice systems amongst other issues. Councillors noted that impact of austerity appeared to be reflected in increases in thefts of food, toiletries and alcohol.

The Strategic Manager Performance and Information Manager noted further information as regards areas of RTAs could be given to Members. Chief Superintendent G Hall added that anecdotally there had been an increase in numbers of vulnerable people and the Community Safety and Involvement Manager noted that suicide prevention was within the Adults, Wellbeing and Health work programme.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 Police and Crime Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the update report as contained within the agenda pack and the Chairman asked if there were any questions. There were no questions raised.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

13 Overview and Scrutiny Review - Neighbourhood Wardens

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that the final meeting of the Working Group had taken place with Officers from Durham Constabulary as well as Officers from DCC. The meeting had given to give Members an understanding of the working relationship between Neighbourhood Wardens, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Police Officers.

The Committee noted that Officers would bring a draft report together and it would be brought forward to Members in January 2014 for their consideration. Members were reminded that there were still opportunities for field study activities in December and any feedback from those would also be considered.

Resolved:

- (i) That the further field study opportunities be noted.
- (ii) That Members receive a draft report in January 2014 for their consideration.