

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Thursday 3 April 2014** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, J Charlton, P Conway, J Gray, C Hampson, G Holland, N Martin, J Measor, T Nearney, P Stradling, J Turnbull and C Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr A J Cooke, Mr B Knevitt, Ms E Roebuck and Mr T Thompson

Co-opted Employees/Officers:

S Errington and Chief Inspector C McGillivray

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Cordon, S Forster, M Hodgson, J Maitland and K Shaw and Chief Superintendent G Hall and Mrs H Raine.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

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

The Chairman welcomed a new Co-opted Member Stuart Errington, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service and thanked Chief Inspector C McGillivray from Durham Constabulary for his attendance.

The Chairman noted that, in order to best accommodate Speakers, it was perhaps preferable to take Item 7 as set out on the agenda as the next item. Members of the Committee agreed.

5 Organised Crime

The Chairman introduced Detective Chief Superintendent, Jane Spraggon from Durham Constabulary who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to Organised Crime in County Durham (for copy see file of minutes).

The Detective Chief Superintendent thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to speak to Committee and noted that the presentation would give Members an overview of the work undertaken by Durham Constabulary, the work with the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) and the improved tactics and joined up approach being undertaken by Durham Constabulary and partners. It was noted that the SDP's Organised Crime Task and Finish Group had the objectives of: reducing the risk to County Durham and Darlington and its interests from organised crime; reducing the threat from organised criminals; and reducing vulnerabilities and criminal opportunities.

Members were reminded that Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) were sophisticated and exploited vulnerable people and any legitimate venture where they could. It was added that the areas of their operations included: distribution of illegal drugs, such as cocaine, heroin and amphetamines; growth and distribution of cannabis; violence and intimidation; and large scale fraud. The Committee learned that OCGs often work together and intimidate communities so that they can carry out their illegal activities. It was added that it was important to work with communities to help them to not feel intimidated and gain the trust of local people to gather information in order to break the hold OCGs have on communities.

The Committee learned that OCGs were scored and mapped on a national scale, and that in County Durham, 35 "families", with around 350 people were making around £400 Million, taking that money out of local communities. Members were given examples of activities that effected communities including: "crash for cash" insurance fraud; drugs and alcohol; and money laundering.

The Detective Chief Superintendent explained that there were several mechanisms in place as regards raising community awareness including: Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings; Neighbourhood Watch; Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) citing work at Easington and Shildon in respect of loan sharks and credit unions; a campaign against illicit tobacco; and work with housing associations in relation to commercial cannabis grows. It was added that activities in relation to working with businesses included: Durham Agency Against Crime; Business and Farm Watch; Durham County Council (DCC) Business Development; and Business Enterprise Agencies.

The Committee learned that various training sessions and events had been undertaken in respect of OCGs with SDP and DCC staff, 500 staff at the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) and with other partners such as housing organisations. Members noted that working with partners could involve use of regulatory powers, where appropriate, such as those available to the Council in order to tackle issues such as money laundering.

Members noted that sessions as regards the OCGs scoring and mapping had taken place with 18 senior representatives from 7 agencies, giving an update on information capture and sharing.

It was added that outcomes from the Organised Crime Task and Finish Strategy Group included improved awareness with media coverage, press releases, leaflets and examples of the “sledgehammer” branding being utilised when tackling OCGs, with several children’s football teams in East Durham having kit with the sledgehammer branding. Councillors learned that information sharing took place with many agencies including Safeguarding and Probation Services, linking to relevant agencies such as drug treatment. The Detective Chief Superintendent explained that the loan shark initiative had been picked up as an issue “from the ground up”, raised through partners as an area to address with advocate training within neighbourhoods and “weeks of action” in Shildon, Crook and Shotton Colliery. Councillors noted that there had been a lot of work in conjunction with partners such as the Environment Agency, Local Authorities and the CDDFRS in tackling OCGs engaged in illegal waste disposal, closing loopholes and ensuring that criminals were paying for any environmental clean-up, not local communities.

The Committee noted that another aspect of dealing with OCGs was violence, in terms of intimidation of local communities and also of violence between criminals. Members noted issues relating to arson, which had a potential for loss of life, and also work to protect children within OCG families. It was added that while the aim was to dismantle OCGs and prevent them operating at all, disruption tactics would be used to make it as difficult as possible for criminals to operate. Councillors noted a slide setting out the partners involved within the disruption panel and setting out how those organisations would work together to ensure disruptions or interventions were being carried out effectively.

The Detective Chief Superintendent concluded by noting that within the last 12 months there had been: seizure of over £½million worth of drugs; around £332,000 in cash detained and over 70 arrests made.

The Chairman thanked the Detective Chief Superintendent and asked Members for their questions.

The Committee asked questions in relation to: cross-border coordination; the role for the broader community and voluntary sector (CVS) in tackling OCGs; how and where the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) monies had been distributed; the role of the Citizens’ Advice Bureau (CAB) in relation to advice; and the role of housing associations in neighbourhood walkabouts and similar activities.

The Detective Chief Superintendent noted that the Police had a Regional Intelligence Unit, based at Durham, which shared information on a daily basis with the other 9 Regional Intelligence Units and the National Crime Agency (NCA). It was added that all input from the CVS would be welcomed in tackling OCGs, and that POCA monies had been used in several places, an example being the purchasing of football strips for 10 children’s football teams at Shotton Colliery, all displaying the sledgehammer branding to reinforce the message of tackling OCGs.

Members noted that the CAB and the relevant Officers at the Council were able to offer advice as regards alternatives to loan sharks, such as credit unions. The Detective Chief Superintendent explained that there were several meetings a year with Durham Constabulary and the Chief Executives of Housing Associations and in respect of neighbourhood and estate walkabouts a good starting point would be through the local Neighbourhood Inspector.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

6 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held 25 February 2014 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee noted that a letter of thanks had been forwarded on behalf of the Committee to Mr John Hewitt, former Co-opted Member and Officer from CDDFRS.

7 Media Relations

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the recent prominent articles and news stories relating to the remit of the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes). An article related to the work of Neighbourhood Wardens in tackling environmental offences, with another referring to arrests made in respect of OCGs and loan sharks as part of a national campaign. Members noted other articles relating to multi-agency work in tackling illegal activities including scrap metal collectors, with the final article referring to the ongoing investigation regarding a local Detention Centre.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

8 Multi-Agency Problem Solving Groups Review

The Chairman introduced the Safer Communities Operations Manager, Neighbourhood Protection, Neighbourhood Services, Caroline Gardner who was in attendance on behalf of the Safer and Stronger Strategic Programme Manager, Jeanette Stephenson to speak to Members in relation to the Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving (LMAPS) and the Multi-Agency Intervention (MAI) process (for copy see file of minutes).

The Safer Communities Operations Manager explained that a review of the LMAPS process was requested by the SDP in 2012 and the subsequent results of the review were presented to the SDP mid-2013. It was added that a project team and task group were put in place and work had been ongoing since September 2013, with a new model produced, consultation carried out, and a pilot of the new process prior to roll out County wide.

The Committee were reminded of the current position as regards MAPS1, linked to Police data regarding a geographic area, noting that there were now 3 monthly meetings led by the Police, corresponding to the 3 Neighbourhood Policing areas, reduced from 11 separate monthly meetings previously. It was added that there was a focus on anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime, in areas such as the former High Impact Localities (HILs), with time-limited action plans if required.

It was added that time-limited groups offered an opportunity for Member involvement, noting that there was work ongoing to ensure consistency in approach across the County.

Members were reminded that currently MAPS2 was based on formal monthly meetings, looking at individuals and families, actions plans being drawn up based upon enforcement and intervention. It was added that focus would be on ASB, robust escalation procedures, tackling high demand individuals.

The Committee heard that the refresh of the process was not due to any failing in the process, rather to reduce the resource burden from the current inflexible monthly meeting based structure and to ensure compliance with best practice in respect of data protection and information sharing. It was added that there was an aim to reduce the impact of "lower-level" repeat incidents, albeit accepting that these types of incidents caused a lot of nuisance within communities. The Safer Communities Operations Manager explained that the SDP looked for a new case management approach, locality based. It was noted that a centralised recording system would be used regarding cases, and the process would be linked to "Stronger Families" and Universal Assessment/Front Door approach. Councillors learned that the focus would be on early intervention and would cover repeat victims and perpetrators of crime, ASB, high volume domestic violence, vulnerable people and missing from homes issues. The Committee noted that a pilot of the new process was planned for the Peterlee area in May 2014, with an aim to roll out the new process to the wider County in the period August to September 2014.

The Safer Communities Operations Manager explained that Members were able to make referrals for relevant local cases, contact the Police to ensure local intelligence is submitted for consideration and, where appropriate, be a member of a "Team around the Locality" (TAL), time-limited groups looking at issues that involve those communities.

Councillors noted the process of escalation, referral, risk assessment and the process of allocation to a "lead professional" heading a "Team around the Adult" (TAA), similar to processes already in place in respect of children. It was added that in respect of cross issue intelligence, 5 key strands were looked at: ASB; Crime; missing from home; vulnerable adult forms; and domestic abuse incidents. Members noted that data was collected over a 6 month period and a report on this noted 56 cases with 5 or more incidents; 31 domestic abuse; 5 crime; 19 ASB; 15 mental health; 17 substance misuse.

The Chairman thanked the Safer Communities Operations Manager and asked Members for their questions.

The Committee asked questions relating to: the role of Members in the LMAPS process; terminology within the report relating to victims as a burden; hate crime not being set out explicitly as an area of focus; feedback to Members as regards progress with cases; information as regards the pilot of the new process being brought back to the Committee; clarity on HILs and "non-HILs" areas; and stay-safe activities.

The Safer Communities Operations Manager noted that in the past, the MAPS2 process would mean that 20-30 cases would be discussed at a meeting and therefore data protection issues would mean that it would be difficult in that forum to be able to discuss the relevant cases where Member involvement would be beneficial, the new process of referrals and TAL groups having been developed to help improve this.

Officers conceded the point as regards the terminology used, and added that hate crime was included within the overarching heading of crime. Chief Inspector C McGillivray noted that while hate crime was included within “crime”, it was noted that there was a need to ensure that the sensitivities around the issue were taken on board and the relevant groups engaged with, supported and encouraged to participate. The Safer Communities Operations Manager added that part of the review of the process was looking at hate crime referrals and getting nationally recognised risk assessment processes in place had been key, noting that the escalation process in place was very good.

The Head of Planning and Service Strategy, Children and Adults Services, Peter Appleton noted that there may be potential issues of data protection, though it may be possible to work with Members where appropriate. It was added that there could be links to AAPs where appropriate with the more formal route as set out, with Members’ involvement, being where individual cases could benefit.

The Safer Communities Operations Manager explained that the HILs project had now completed and therefore HILs had ceased, though the TAL model would pick up the work of the HILs and the stay safe activities had been proven as good interventions and providing local intelligence for further actions. Members were reminded that the pilot for the new process would be carried out in the east of the County and that further information on the progress of the pilot could be brought back to the Committee.

Resolved:

- (i) That the content of the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That further information is brought back to a future meeting of the Committee as regards progress in relation to the pilot of the new process.

9 Update on the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013

The Chairman introduced the Consumer Protection Manager, Neighbourhood Services, Owen Cleugh who was in attendance to give Members an update in relation to the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Consumer Protection Manager noted that since October 2013, there had been 148 applications for Collector’s Licences or Site Licences, being 31 sites and 76 collectors, higher than the regional average. Members noted a map within the report showing the distribution of sites and collectors across the County, a small number of applications from outside of the County also set out within the report. Members noted that there had been a large volume of objections, mainly from Durham Constabulary, and that 1 collector’s licence had been refused. It was added that a key part to the success of the licensing regime would be effective education, enforcement and intelligence gathering and sharing. Councillors were reminded of the excellent working relationships between the Authority and Durham Constabulary, noting that the inspection process would now be programmed. Members learned that there was a hope that there would be an element of “self-policing”, those legitimate businesses that had applied for licences reporting on those operating outside of the system and media releases would give the public information on what to look for in terms of appropriate badging on vehicles.

The Chairman thanked the Consumer Protection Manager and asked Members for their questions.

The Committee asked questions relating to: the late start in processing licences; what mobile collectors needed to display on their vehicles and whether there was a requirement for an identification card or similar; frustration at late changes in legislation; and potential further training for Licensing Members.

The Consumer Protection Manager explained that the late start was due to awaiting objections prior to being able to process the application and then to either grant a licence or send an application to Licensing Committee for consideration. It was added that mobile collectors did have to display a badge on the windscreen of their vehicle, though there was no obligation as regards individuals carrying identification. The Consumer Protection Manager reminded Members that any information as regards suspected metal theft or suspicious activities could be passed on to Durham Constabulary, or to the Consumer Protection Team. The Committee noted that new guidance issued by Government in March 2014 in respect of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 had changed the scope for considering applications for Licences, and more guidance for Members will be brought forward when moving to a policy being adopted.

Resolved:

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That a further update report is received by the Committee at a future meeting.

10 Draft Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2014/17

The Chairman thanked the Head of Planning and Service Strategy who was in attendance to give Members an update in relation to the Draft Safe Durham Partnership Plan 2014/17 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Planning and Service Strategy reminded Members that at the last meeting of the Committee, Councillors had commented on the draft strategic objectives and outcomes and those comments had been incorporated into the draft plan as set out within the agenda pack. The Committee noted that significant edits to the draft had included strengthening in respect of: domestic abuse; domestic homicides; LMAPS; and OCGs. It was added that in future, AAPs could be used as a method of consultation and for communicating information. It was noted that the Plan was still in draft form and that Members still had the opportunity to comment further prior to the draft plan being considered by the SDP in May, then for formal adoption by Cabinet and Council in June and July respectively.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Planning and Service Strategy and asked Members for their questions.

Members asked questions in respect of: Transforming Rehabilitation; feedback as regards the draft SDP; the role of Members as “community leaders”; and the welcome inclusion of “reduce the impact of hate crime” within the Plan, though suggesting that increased numbers of incidents could be an increased number of reports, therefore details as regards convictions in this respect could be a useful measure.

The Head of Planning and Service Strategy noted that Transforming Rehabilitation was a complicated issue and that those involved were working with partners in relating to change management to minimise risks. It was noted that feedback on the draft SDP Plan could be given to the Head of Planning and Service Strategy or via the Overview and Scrutiny Officers, by 30 April 2014. The Head of Planning and Service Strategy noted the comments regarding the role of Councillors as “community leaders” and added that the issues raised as regards hate crime could be looked at further. Chief Inspector C McGillivray added that the data set relating to hate crime was being worked on as regards giving the information as suggested.

Resolved:

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That a response to the consultation containing the views of Members be submitted by the Committee.

11 Quarter 3, 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 3 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 detected crimes for offenders in the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) cohort (46% reduction); the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System being better than the national average; and a continued reduction of repeat presentations at the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) well below national and regional levels. Members noted that the Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) would be undertaking a self-assessment to explore the apparent lower level of referrals.

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, noting that this issue had been highlighted at the Overview and Scrutiny Workshop looking at performance indicators; and an increase in the child Road Traffic Accident (RTA) figures.

The Committee learned that tracker indicators linked to the Altogether Safer theme highlighted an overall increase in crime for Quarter 3 though the level was still below the 2012 figures and that the recent serious crime investigations, linked to national investigations, would affect the statistics. 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, though as data lag of 18 months was an issue, there was work ongoing looking at a local measure to provide more up-to-date information.

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

Members asked questions in relation to: the effect of new light emitting diode (LED) street lighting on crime and ASB figures; the poor RTA figures and whether this warranted further investigation; how crime figures were recorded, noting any “taken into consideration” offences; and the issue of performance of Community Drug Services and whether this was an issue for the Chief Constable to discuss with Members.

Councillor J Armstrong noted that the new street lighting was in the process of being rolled out across the County and it would be an issue to look at in 6-8 months, noting that the new technology would deliver large carbon footprint and energy bill savings.

The Chairman noted that there was disappointment in the RTA figures, with the Committee having undertaken a review of Road Safety, and the topic could perhaps be revisited within the Committee’s work programme.

Chief Inspector C McGillivray explained that crime statistics “taken into consideration” offences would be create “new offences” if they were not previously detected crime, though what percentage those offences were of the overall total was not clear. Members were reminded of the successes in tackling crimes that were associated with increasing austerity, hate crime and in relation to ongoing national investigations.

The Chairman and Councillor J Armstrong both noted that it may be appropriate to have a report on the position of the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner in relation to the subject of substance misuse, with an invitation for them to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 Council Plan 2014-2017 - Refresh of the Work Programme

The Chairman introduced the Corporate Improvement Manager, Assistant Chief Executive’s, Tom Gorman to speak to Members in relation to the Council Plan 2014-2017 - Refresh of the Work Programme for the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Improvement Manager explained that the report was the first stage in the usual annual process of setting the work programme for the Committee, in the context of the “Altogether Safer” priority theme as set out in the Council Plan 2014-2017. Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Committee would consider a draft work programme and project plan, based upon the comments from Members brought forward at the meeting today. Councillors were informed that the meeting of Council, 2 April 2014 had considered and approved the refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy and Council Plan with the “Altogether Safer” section attached at Appendix 2 to the report in the agenda pack.

The Committee noted that the work undertaken by the Committee over the last year was set out within the report and it was for Members to suggest topics for further investigation, taking on board issues raised from performance reporting, upcoming legislation and issues discussed at the Committee.

The Corporate Improvement Manager explained that there was potential for cross-cutting issues to generate joint activities and there were several potential issues for the Committee to consider, including: illegal waste carriers, linking to OCGs as discussed previous in the agenda; ASB and Environmental Crime, as picked up within the performance report; illegal money lending; and the impact of substance misuse treatment centres on re-offending rates.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Improvement Manager asked Members for their questions.

Councillor P Conway noted the issue of a strategic approach to tackling drugs was worth consideration by the Committee. The Chairman noted that the issue of substance misuse linked to re-offending could be a topic to be revisited, and the Head of Planning and Service Strategy added that the overarching topic of drugs was cross-cutting issue not just linked to crime, also to health, as considered by both the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Chairman noted that the scope of the overarching topic of drugs was considerable, and that in terms of the work programme for the Committee, a focus on the issue of substance misuse treatment centres linked to re-offending would be a sensible approach. Councillor P Conway noted that the strategic approach to tackling the issue of drugs was an important one and should be addressed at whichever relevant Committee or forum. Councillor J Armstrong noted that the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner would be involved in looking at the strategic level, linking to other partners in respect of resources and the health and treatment aspects.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor T Nearney noted that Members of the Committee had identified issues as being: the performance of Community Drugs Service; OCGs; and the new LMAPS approach.

The Chairman asked Members as regards their choice for a main topic for the work programme for the Committee, Members unanimously chose the topic of the Impact of Re-offending Rates from Substance Misuse Centres.

Resolved:

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Committee receive a further report detailing the Committee's work programme for 2014-2015.
- (iii) That the Committee agree to undertake a review looking at the impact of reducing re-offending rates from substance misuse centres.

13 Overview and Scrutiny Review - Neighbourhood Wardens

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the draft Report of the Working Group as set out within the agenda papers, incorporating the comments made subsequent to the last meeting of the Group held in February. It was noted that subject to Members' approval, the report would be submitted for consideration by Cabinet at their meeting in April.

Resolved:

That the report be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

14 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.

15 Safe Durham Partnership Update

The Chairman thanked the Head of Planning and Service Strategy who was in attendance to give Members a verbal update in relation to the Safe Durham Partnership.

The Head of Planning and Service Strategy noted that the timing of the meeting of the SDP Board was such that it was not possible to produce a formal report relating to the information discussed in time to be included within the agenda papers.

Councillors noted that issues discussed at the meeting included: strengthening the response to domestic abuse; support for LMAPS; the draft SDP Plan; performance indicators; Transforming Rehabilitation; the governance of the SDP Board; and Restorative Approaches.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.