

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 21 February 2017** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor D Boyes (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, J Charlton, S Forster, J Gray, C Hampson, S Iveson, H Liddle, J Maitland, N Martin, T Nearney, J Turnbull and C Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Mr A J Cooke and Mr J Welch

Co-opted Employees/Officers:

Chief Superintendent A Green

Also Present:

Councillors J Allen

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Hodgson, K Shaw, P Stradling, F Tinsley and Chief Fire Officer S Errington.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the Special meeting held 1 December 2016 and the meeting held 9 January 2017 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Jonathan Slee noted that in reference to the meeting held 1 December 2016 and the issue of road safety, the response from the committee had been circulated to the Chair of the Road Casualty Reduction Partnership and the Portfolio Holder. It was added that in respect of the meeting held 9 January 2017 on the issue of cybercrime, a range of information was shared with members after the meeting.

Members noted also that a joint response from the committee and the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been forwarded to the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) in respect of their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). Councillors were reminded that information in respect of the consultation on the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner's (PCVC's) Budget 2017/18.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

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

6 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). The articles included: information from Durham County Council (DCC) being used to support a Local Government Association (LGA) campaign in respect of used tyres, noting some that were resold were over 20 years old; the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) having carried out Safe and Wellbeing Visits (SWVs) for a year, with 17,000 homes visited and 1,800 referrals made; and Durham and Cleveland Special Operations Unit fining 133 drivers caught using mobile phones behind the wheel.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

7 Consumer Protection Enforcement

The Chairman introduced the Consumer Protection Manager, Adult and Health Services, Owen Cleugh to give a presentation to Members in respect of Consumer Protection Enforcement (for copy see file of minutes).

The Consumer Protection Manager noted that Environment, Health and Consumer Protection now sat within the Adult and Health Services directorate and added that he would explain to Members how Consumer Protection looked at risks and then would look at prevention, intelligence and enforcement (PIE).

Members noted the top ten areas of concern in connections with goods, with used cars being the main area and the criminal top ten, with scams, whether by e-mail, telephone or doorstep being the main priority area, also including illicit tobacco and counterfeit goods. It was added there was work ongoing in terms of improving data and that fair trading and mis-description were also areas which received a large amount of service requests.

Councillors noted that prevention included articles in the media to advise on scams, also use of social media, podcasts and video logs on subjects such as rogue traders including dog breeders. It was added that there had been a lot of positive feedback on these videos. Members noted partnership working, including the Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) and groups such as the Magistrates' Group and Age Concern. The Consumer Protection Manager added that home visits were carried out as appropriate to educate in terms of doorstep crime and in terms of enforcement where it could be, rather than going down a full enforcement route, provision of some education and training in an area could help to prevent an issue. It was noted that should enforcement action be required, it would be followed up accordingly and the operations with Consumer Protection and the Police in terms of underage sales were recognised nationally as best practice.

In terms of intelligence, the Consumer Protection Manager noted use of the GB Accelerator and Memex databases and use of financial information as appropriate. It was noted that there were projects and surveys going throughout the year including: part-worn tyres; e-cigarettes, both sales and safety; and a tobacco roadshow featuring the Tobacco Alliance.

The Consumer Protection Manager explained in terms of enforcement Members had learned as regards: prosecutions; seizures and warrants; undertakings and injunctions; test purchases and Licence Reviews, where appropriate. The Committee noted new tactics included: interim injunctions; Criminal Behaviour Orders; and use of the Fraud Act and the Proceeds of Crime Act. It was added that an accredited Financial Officer within the Consumer Protection Team was helping in terms of investigations.

Councillors noted that in respect of licensing a new taxi policy was introduced in April 2016 and the Immigration Act was in effect from December 2016. It was added that there was use of Disclosure and Barring Service online and that child sexual exploitation awareness were requirements as part of applications. Members noted new requirements in terms of local assessments, in connection with Gambling Act Policy revision. It was explained that breakdown of the types of licences requested was set out, with the largest proportion being those for hackney carriage licences or renewals, and the highest proportion of those under the Licensing Act being for temporary event notices, only 5% representing new premises license applications.

The Consumer Protection Manager noted that in terms of enforcement and interventions, 80 drivers had been referred to committee and it was explained that 31 drivers had licences suspended with immediate effect. Members noted figures in terms of other actions and learned as regards six prosecutions in terms scrap metal dealers.

The Chairman thanked the Consumer Protection Manager and asked members for any questions.

Mr AJ Cooke noted concern as regards telephone scams and added that when a number comes up on a caller ID you can then check this via the internet to see if it is a genuine number or a nuisance caller, however he added that on these sites it can ask for details as regards the call to update those records and asked who updated those records. The Consumer Protection Manager added that in order to try to block such calls there was the Telephone Preference Service, however when a withheld number was used this can present an issue.

It was added that the best method was prevention, for example if you answer a call and no one is on the line initially, this could be an indication of the use of automatic dialling, with the call only being diverted to a “scammer” if the call is picked up. The best option in such situations is to hang up the phone. It was noted that there were many such “self-help” websites, however there was no guarantees as regards the information they provided, and that prevention was always a better approach.

Councillor J Maitland asked as regards Uber, and how this may affect County Durham and what controls the Council would have. The Consumer Protection Manager noted that Uber were an “app-based” operator, with transactions arranged via their software. It was added that Uber had applied for an Operator’s licence for County Durham before Christmas, noting they already had a licence for Newcastle. It was added that current licensing legislation was out of date in this regard and it was an issue that authorities had raised with the LGA, but for Members’ information Uber were licenced and he believed they were recruiting. The Consumer Protection Manager added that Uber had proven to be controversial in some places they had begun to operate, however, it was explained that the Authority had worked to explain how “Durham works” and that Highways were working with them on issues of where they could park, given that they operated as private hire, not hackney carriage.

Councillor T Nearney noted that his local AAP, Stanley, had worked with AGE UK in terms of a “Beat the Scammers” campaign. He also asked whether there were the resources and capacity within the Consumer Protection Team in terms of workloads and the changing nature of activities, with more and more being linked to online, for example purchasing counterfeit goods via social media sites. The Consumer Protection Manager noted that Durham was working with other Local Authorities with information shared via the Memex system previously mentioned. It was added that resources and capacity were always issues, however, the Team were working alongside partners to look at emerging issues.

The Chairman asked whether the team were still co-located with officers from Durham Constabulary at Meadowfield. The Consumer Protection Manager noted this was the case with all working effectively as one team, for example Consumer Protection staff having access to the police Red Sigma system.

The Chairman asked how part-worn tyres were regulated and policed. The Consumer Protection Manager noted that some part-worn tyres were unsafe, and there were overt inspections of dealers and that a next stage would be to carry out covert test purchases to ensure that correct practices were being adhered to.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

8 County Durham and Darlington Reducing Reoffending Group Update

The Chairman introduced the Chief of Staff, Office of the Police, Crime and Victims’ Commissioner, Alan Reiss to give a presentation to Members in respect of the County Durham and Darlington Reducing Reoffending Group Update (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chief of Staff explained that reducing reoffending was not the responsibility of one agency and that many worked in partnership, including the police, courts, national probation service (NPS), prisons and departments within local authorities such as public health, housing, education and enforcement. It was added that the Reducing Reoffending Group was one forum to look at designing efficient systems.

Members noted statistics that showed that 60% adults that were sent to prison for less than 12 months reoffended within 12 months, and 46% of all those released from prison reoffend within 12 months. It was highlighted that 45% of all “acquisitive” crime is carried out by regular users of heroin or crack cocaine.

Councillors were referred to a “strategy on a page” (for copy see file of minutes) setting out the vision of the Group and two outcomes as set out in the Council’s Sustainable Communities Strategy of preventing intergenerational offending and preventing repeat offending.

Councillors noted three objectives, looking to tackle the issue at source being:

- Identify those at risk of offending and ensure appropriate support is in place to break the cycle of intergenerational offending
- Implement early intervention strategies with the aim to divert individuals from the Criminal Justice System and promote positive outcomes for victims
- Ensure critical pathway evidence informs needs-based solutions using integrated offender management principles

Members noted that there are a number of “critical pathways” which support reductions in reoffending. These include accommodation, employment, drugs, alcohol, mental health and relationship support. A key part of the work of the group is ensuring that these are available and effective at each stage of the criminal justice system.

The Chief of Staff explained that there were a number of areas that were important in enabling the relevant agencies to work together effectively including: communication, especially of the impact of a decision of one partner on another; performance management, in having timely data with local measures being developed; and knowledge and skills across the workforce.

The Chairman thanked the Chief of Staff and asked Members for any questions.

Councillor J Allen, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities noted that it was important to break the cycle of reoffending and to support victims. She added that often children within a household with offenders can be victims and that it was vital to support those children to help combat intergenerational crime and give those children help in terms of resilience as well as good mental health and wellbeing.

The Chief of Staff noted that was exactly right, and Durham Constabulary worked with the Council’s “Stronger Families” programme and other agencies to help provide wrap around support, and that it had been highlighted at the last Safe Durham Partnership (SDP) meeting that more referrals were needed. It was added that at the County Durham Partnership (CDP) had received a presentation from the Interim Corporate Director of Children and Young People’s Services on the issue of child neglect.

The Chief of Staff added that it was important to have a strong partnership approach and to support children early. Councillor J Armstrong noted that there was a need to try and identify those young people, understanding issues of capacity, however there was a need to stop the cycle.

The Chairman asked as regards the “buy-in” from partners, and if there were any methods to help in this regard.

The Chief of Staff explained that in working with a wide range of agencies, there were issues in terms of differing geography, funding and reporting lines and that the role of the PCVC helped in terms of bringing people together. The Chief of Staff added that he believed that we were getting buy-in from partners, with good attendance at quarterly meetings. He added that the members of the Reducing Reoffending Group felt there needed to be better penetration into those organisations, however there was good buy-in at the higher levels.

The Head of Planning and Service Strategy, Transformation and Partnerships, Peter Appleton noted the Reducing Reoffending Group reported back to the SDP and noted the robustness of the partnership arrangements. Members noted that it was important for communications to be simple and that there was a learning process for partners to go through.

Councillor T Nearney added he felt early intervention was important and asked as regards the community trigger and community remedy. The Chief of Staff noted that those specifically dealt with issues of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and that prevention work carried out via the County Durham Youth Offending Service (CDYOS) looked to divert young people away from becoming first time entrants to the criminal justice system (CJS).

The Chairman noted that there was a “hard core” of offenders within communities that were unresponsive and some people felt that these offenders were to an extent “getting away with it”. The Chief of Staff added that there were issues in general, such as confidence in the CJS and the sentencing that is given. Members noted that there was a need for communities to help the police in being able to develop strong cases based on evidence to enable the Crown Prosecution Service to secure convictions.

The Chief of Staff added that prisons also had a role, with not just being in place to offer a punishment but also to help rehabilitate, getting to the root cause of behaviours and circumstances to help support those individuals to change. Chief Superintendent A Green added that 60% of children seen by the CDYOS had been witness to domestic violence and that Operation Encompass was Durham Constabulary working with DCC and schools to improve the support for children affected by domestic abuse. Chief Superintendent A Green added a service directory was being built up, mutual gain was being extended to help communities be more robust, and that each layer was being looked at to all direct efforts in the same direction with high impact interventions to help feed into prevention more.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That the Strategy on a Page be noted.
- (iii) That the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further update at a future meeting.

9 Vulnerability Intervention Pathways (VIP & formerly MAIS) Update Report

The Chairman introduced the Neighbourhood Protection Manager, Ian Hoult to give a update to Members in respect of Vulnerability Intervention Pathways (VIP) and formerly MAIS (Multi-Agency Intervention Service) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager explained that VIP was a multi-agency approach with local partners working together to manage adults who may:

- Be a victim of ASB or crime
- Repeatedly cause ASB or crime
- Be a persistent complainant
- Be at risk of harm and/or have other factors which increase their vulnerability
- Place a high demand on services

It was noted that there were excellent partnership arrangements in place in Durham, and that the change was to try and understand the underlying causes of behaviour, rather than just responding to incidents. It was added that of over 400 people engaged with: 50% had mental health issues; 49% causing ASB with alcohol as a factor; 25% had suffered domestic abuse; 25% had some level of drug or substance misuse; with a significant number also having issues in terms of unemployment and finances.

It was explained that there were often a number of complex factors involved and referred members to case studies within the agenda papers. It was noted that individuals identified for multiple agency involvement would have a “team around the adult” meeting arranged by their Navigator, with the relevant specialists and professionals would also have an action plan agreed and this would be regularly reviewed by the Navigator.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager noted that a lean review had been carried out last summer and this had looked at making the process less complex, and to generate more “buy-in”. It had also lead to employing specific Navigators and some funds had been allocated by the Council and Durham Constabulary. It was added that in terms of referrals there had been a number element changed in order to help early interventions:

- The ability to refer for frontline officers had been simplified
- The use of existing referrals to the “central referral unit” (CRU) to assess and redirect to VIP appropriate cases, this additionally allows CRU referrals that did not meet high risk levels to be channelled for further work
- The data feed that comes from police systems has been changed to one that reflects risks and run on a 6 monthly basis to review

It was added that the operational board had multi-agency involvement and that as a SDP initiative the project continued to provide updates on a regular basis.

The Chairman thanked the Neighbourhood Protection Manager and asked members for any questions.

Councillor J Allen asked as regards young people that may requires support and those services being available at appropriate times, not just “9 to 5” services.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager noted that while VIP was for adults, there was out of hours support for those young people as described, with a suite of officers and small fund in terms of funding travel costs.

The Chairman asked as regards where referrals came from. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager noted that the majority came via the police and was fairly distributed with around 40% from the East of the County, 30% from the South West and 30% from the North. It was added that the emphasis was on helping to simplify processes to help in terms of time pressures, noting good referrals from the police and via the council itself, with some improvements to be made in terms of referrals from Health.

Councillor J Armstrong added he felt that the Navigators would be very important in this initiative. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager noted there were currently none in place, however coordinators were working the role around their day jobs. It was added that the Lean Review had identified a need for consent of those involved and motivation and therefore Navigators were needed with skills to do this. It was explained that there would be six in total across County Durham, based in localities though flexible. It was noted that a joint unit would evaluate in terms of early interventions.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further update in twelve months' time.

10 Review Group Report - Home Safety - Safe and Wellbeing Visits

The Chairman asked the Vice-Chairman, Councillor T Nearney and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to update Members of the Committee in terms of the Review Group Report looking at Home Safety – Safe and Wellbeing Visits (SWVs).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that the CDDFRS had worked as regards a national policy in terms of integrating fire and health services. It was noted that the approach of CDDFRS was very different to that of other fire services, looking at a broader remit of issues linked to fire deaths and across all of County Durham and Darlington. Members were reminded that the review had comprised of a number of evidence gathering sessions and field study sessions.

Councillor T Nearney noted that the CDDFRS had been very open and worked with the council as partners and the process of referrals had been continuously improved based upon feedback from those involved. It was noted that the review group report (for copy in draft see file of minutes) contained six recommendations and would be considered by Cabinet on 15 March and then the SDP after that date. Councillor T Nearney drew members' attention to recommendation two, which highlighted the wealth of data being produced that could be used to help target services, resources and campaigns in the future. Councillor T Nearney added that recommendation three looked at monitoring the successes and risks of the SWVs, with the CDDFRS taking on additional workload, working with other public sector partners all with diminishing resources. It was added that communication of the purpose and benefits of the SWVs was important and that there would be opportunities for new Members post-election as well as town and parish councils and AAPs to promote the SWVs.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that if members agreed the draft report, it would go to the March Cabinet for consideration, and to the SDP subsequent to this.

The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chairman for his excellent work and chairing of the Working Group and also to the members on the group and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer and those involved from the CDDFRS and Public Health.

Mr AJ Cooke noted he endorsed the report and added that he could attest to the effectiveness of the SWVs, especially in his local areas in the Dales, with local people feeling protected by the excellent services provided by the CDDFRS.

Councillor S Forster added that she too felt the CDDFRS were doing an excellent job and that it may be possible to link in with Al-Anon working with families and friends dealing with alcohol issues.

Councillor J Allen noted that as the Cabinet Member she felt this was an excellent piece of work and had highlighted the excellent work of the CDDFRS and partners, and also the risks in terms of funding and resources.

Councillor J Armstrong noted that this review had demonstrated the value of overview and scrutiny and reiterated that the CDDFRS were doing a lot of work on a voluntary basis and that he was concerned about the risks to financial sustainability of the scheme in the future. The Chairman noted that it was important to note that the work the CDDFRS were undertaking would have benefits in terms of prevention and early intervention that would help in terms of NHS pressures and that he felt that health funding might be something that would help with the future of the scheme.

Councillor J Armstrong and the Chairman added that he wished to thank Councillor T Nearney for his excellent work in chairing this review.

Resolved:

That the Committee agree the Review Report and it be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

11 Police and Crime Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the report setting out the main issues discussed at the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted the main issues included:

- Consultation on Council Tax Police Precept 2017-18
- Road Safety

Members noted that the Road Safety presentation had some similar aspects to that received by committee, however, with the PCVC's actions in terms of road safety.

Councillor J Armstrong noted some cross-over in terms of issues between the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Police and Crime Panel (PCP). The Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that there was also some cross-over with the PCP and the scrutiny community at Darlington Borough Council that is responsible for community safety matters. He also added that there is a document in place in terms of sharing information as regards PCP meetings back to respective scrutiny functions at both local authorities.

Councillor J Armstrong suggested it may be appropriate to invite the PCVC to a future meeting of the committee. Councillor C Wilson added that it was also important to feed information from the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee back through the AAPs.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12 Safe Durham Partnership Update

The Chairman asked the Community Safety Manager, Caroline Duckworth to speak to members as regards an update from the Safe Durham Partnership (SDP).

The Community Safety Manager noted that issues discussed at the SDP meeting included several that were mentioned in the Committee's agenda, including the review report on alcohol and its demand on the emergency services and the Vulnerable Intervention Programme and the Reducing Reoffending Group.

Members noted other issues discussed included the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, the issues around cybercrime, and the CDDFRS Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Action Plan 2017/18 consultation previously discussed at committee.

The Community Safety Manager noted that the SDP had also discussed the Mental Health Crisis Concordat and the new 2 year action plan to be delivered between 2016 and 2018, including development of a single point of access and improving links to Local Authority suicide prevention work, Police training and use of digital technologies.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.