

These minutes are draft subject to confirmation at the next meeting

Housing Sub-Committee

22 February 2016

Present: Councillor S Cox (Chair)
Councillors A Arkle, L Darke, M Madden, P
Mason, A Newman, M Thirlaway and J Walker

H041/02/16 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Austin, D Drummond, John Hunter and P Oliver.

H042/02/16 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members appointed.

H043/02/16 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

H044/02/16 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

H045/02/16 Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Northumbria Police, Vera Baird, was in attendance to provide Members with an update on the delivery of the 2013-18 Police and Crime Plan and to answer some specific questions that the sub-committee had raised at its previous meeting. The PCC was joined by Temporary Chief Superintendent Sharon Stavers and Inspector Neil Armsworth.

Members received a report which outlined the sub-committee's role in relation to scrutinising crime and disorder issues and provided some background information on the role of the PCC. The Housing sub-committee had been designated as the Council's crime and disorder committee when it was established in June 2014. The requirement for the Council to have a scrutiny committee designated to consider crime and disorder originated from the Police and Justice Act 2006.

The Chair invited the Police and Crime Commissioner to update the sub-committee on key issues and initiatives that were currently in place across North Tyneside. The PCC began by reminding members that North Tyneside continued to be the safest metropolitan borough in the country. The issue of funding was raised and it was noted that the funding position continued to be a challenge, with Northumbria Police facing the largest of cuts across all forces. It was noted that funding was made up of government grant and council tax (through the precept). It was noted that Northumbria had a low precept in comparison to other police force areas, which still remained low despite a 1.99% rise for 2015/16. The sub-committee asked the Commissioner to provide some additional information in relation

22 February 2016

to the funding and precept arrangements and why Northumbria had experienced a higher level of funding cuts.

The sub-committee was informed that police funding had been cut by 26%, resulting in the loss of 841 police officers and 961 police staff. Members were informed that changes had been successfully implemented by Northumbria Police to protect frontline policing on the beat. This had involved the merging of 6 area commands to 3, which so far had been manageable. Another initiative brought in to mitigate funding cuts was Resolution Without Deployment, where police would respond with a telephone call rather than send an officer out. An example of when this might occur when a shoplifting incident had occurred (where the perpetrator was no longer on the premises), the police would ask the shop owner to email the CCTV footage rather than sending an officer out to collect it.

Crime recording was a further area raised by the PCC, as new requirements had been brought in by Northumbria Police, which resulted in a rise of the number of crimes recorded. This was a robust recording practice which provided recoding of key information. Members of the sub-committee were also informed of some work that had been undertaken with North Tyneside Council in relation to support for victims of anti-social behaviour. The system in North Tyneside, where volunteers were sought to provide an independent source of support and advice to those suffering anti-social behaviour, was rolled out across other local authorities following some funding from the PCC.

In preparation for the discussion with the PCC, the sub-committee had identified some key issues that they wished to raise that they knew to be of concern to the public. These issues had been shared with the PCC prior to the meeting. The first issue raised was parking enforcement. Members had raised several instances where problems had occurred from caravans or large vans parking on footpaths blocking access to homes. It seemed to be unclear who was responsible for dealing with this issue. The police informed Members that if a vehicle was parked on double yellow lines it was a civil enforcement issue that the Council would deal with. If the vehicle was causing an obstruction on the pavement, this would be a police issue. It was noted that if a pedestrian had to walk around the vehicle it would not necessarily constitute an obstruction, but if pedestrians were forced to go onto the road due to the positioning of the vehicle this would be an obstruction. The police officer attending would decide if the vehicle was causing an obstruction. The Chief Superintendent invited Members to forward any particular cases they were aware of that had not been resolved so that they could gather some more information in relation to the situation.

The second issue raised by the sub-committee was burglary, in particular the capacity to respond to all cases. This was following news reports that some forces would not always send out a police officer after the reporting of a burglary. It was noted that North Tyneside had the best burglary rates across Northumbria and were on target to reduce that number further. Members were reassured that all burglaries were responded to and that this would always be the response from Northumbria Police. It was highlighted that the police understood what a personal crime burglary was and that support was provided to all victims, especially those left feeling vulnerable. It was noted that local neighbourhood police were notified when an individual was due to be released from prison following a burglary and that plans would be out in place to try and divert a repeat offence.

The third issue that had been raised by the sub-committee was Police Community Support Officers and neighbourhood policing, with Members seeking assurance that maintaining this approach would remain a priority. The police officers in attendance assured that neighbourhood policing would remain at the centre of all police activities, with no intention to divert from this set-up and that the police in communities would continue to be visible. Changes to the staffing structures to make efficiencies had been at senior management level in order to retain a high level of officers on the ground.

Members referred to the next round of budget cuts that the police would face and asked whether there were any further areas to make savings other than reducing the number of officers. It was noted that new ideas were constantly being looked at and that greater power could be given to community support officers in order to free up more police officer time. The community support officers were a valuable source of intelligence amongst communities, as they were seen as easier to talk to than officers, as they do not carry what could be seen as intimidating equipment. A further way in which resources were being carefully deployed was the new diary appointment system. This was for situations where a police officer needed to attend a case/incident but it was non-urgent and an appointment would be made with the victim/witness that was most convenient for them, rather than having to respond within the set 4 hours. A car would be set aside and an officer would tend to all the appointments in a systematic way which would not clash with response policing.

The Chair thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Superintendent and Inspector for their attendance.

It was **agreed** to note the information provided.

H046/02/16 Safer North Tyneside

The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement was in attendance to provide a report on the work of the Safer North Tyneside Partnership (the Partnership) over the previous 12 months and to set out a new way of working for the Partnership going forward. Appended to the report was the Safer North Tyneside priorities identified to help reduce crime, disorder and offending and to tackle community concerns.

The sub-committee was informed of several projects that the Partnership had overseen over the past 12 months including the taxi marshal scheme and a successful funding bid for North Tyneside's Young Mayor. In relation to the taxi marshal scheme, the Safer North Tyneside Board had agreed to fund two taxi marshals to help alleviate problems with the taxi rank in Tynemouth. Complaints from residents were around a small number of anti-social behaviour issues and noise pollution due to passengers not using the head of the rank. The marshals had been funded from 21st August 2015 until 2nd January 2016. Whilst the board were not in a position to extend the scheme due to a lack of available funding, the residents are considering proposals to improve the use of the overall rank.

The Young Cabinet had developed a bid for a grant from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Victims Fund 2015/16 to fund an Anti Bullying Campaign. The bid had been successful and they received £16,649 to fund:

- An Awareness Campaign, including posters, leaflets and a DVD
- Volunteer expenses to support Helping Hands project
- Development of Anti Bullying Standards Awards for schools/colleges
- Anti Bullying Celebration Event

The sub-committee was presented with performance data which demonstrated progress on the delivery of targets for 2014/15 and 2015/16. It was noted that all volume reduction targets were markedly off track. In relation to recorded crime, this was due to a robust recording practice implemented by Northumbria Police that had led to increases in all categories in all areas of the force.

Safer North Tyneside had agreed that in future a more intelligent performance structure would be adopted. This would be based on comparisons with local and statistical partners. Using such a method would correct seasonal variations and give a more accurate

representation of exceptions to performance, both positive and negative. It was highlighted that when considering the 4 off track targets by this method (violence with injury; serious acquisitive crime; criminal damage and deliberate fires) it would become apparent that performance is better than the peer average and often in the best-performing for any given group. It was highlighted that North Tyneside remains the safest metropolitan borough in England.

The sub-committee was informed that funding for Agencies against Racist Crime and Harassment (ARCH), a national approach to reporting and recording hate crime, came to an end in March 2015. Newcastle City Council had provided the system free of charge for one year while they worked on a bid for Lottery Funding that would enable the roll out of ARCH across the region free of charge to all Local Authorities. In October 2015 the authority was informed that the bid would no longer be progressed and from April 2016 North Tyneside would be charged for the system at £5530 per annum. This would not be sustainable so alternatives were sought. Discussions had taken place with Northumberland County Council who had implemented a Hate Crime App and found that a large number of referrals were made as a result. North Tyneside's ICT service had confirmed that they could develop a self reporting system for North Tyneside that would fit with the overarching ICT strategy. Timescales were to be discussed with Heads of Service over the following weeks.

The sub-committee was informed that at a meeting of the Safer North Tyneside Board in January, a new way of working had been proposed. This involved refreshing the Community Safety Strategy whilst retaining the four key themes: Crime, Disorder, Offending and Community Concerns and Confidence. The Board had discussed a report with 5 recommendations to improve the efficiency and work of the Partnership. These recommendations were:

- To revise the Community Safety Strategy to more clearly identify actions, coordination and support activities;
- To disband the current Thematic Groups in favour of one 'Theme Management Group' which will gather senior officers together with an overall aim of collating information, identifying links and sharing information about current priorities, gaps and issues. This will largely replace the Policy and Performance Group;
- To better use the reach of the partnership to make links to wider initiatives which count towards the actions identified and target resources, campaigns and public information in a more timely way. We will use the Strategic Assessment in a more targeted way to identify trends and troubleshoot issues more effectively;
- To explore new ways of working with Adults and Children's Safeguarding Teams, Public Health, Domestic Violence, Hate Crime, Youth Offending, Troubled Families and Resilience to identify what links there are to ongoing work and SNT priorities;
- To work more closely with community groups to consult on priorities, identify problems and solutions and promote what the SNT Partnership is doing.

The next steps to implementing the new way of working would be to hold a workshop with all relevant council services and partners whose work contributed to the Partnership's aims and objectives. This would take place before the end of the financial year so that an action plan could be drawn up. There would also be a forward plan for the SNT Board meetings so that members could receive reports in a timely way to provide some challenge and oversight.

In relation to ARCH, Members expressed the importance of not letting work on this fall by the way side and that any app developed would have to be accessible and easy to use to encourage people to report these crimes.

The Chair thanked Councillor Burdis for her attendance and the information shared. The sub-committee supported the proposed changes to the working of the SNT Board. It was highlighted that if any Member had further comments on the work of the Partnership they could send these to the Cabinet Member.

It was **agreed** to note the report and the information provided.