

Environment and Culture Sub-Committee

12 March 2014

Present: Councillor B Burdis (Chair)
Councillors G Bell, C Davis, G Madden, M Madden,
S E Mortimer and D Ord.

EC39/03/14 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors P McIntyre and J Pickard.

EC40/03/14 Substitute Members

There were no substitutes reported

EC41/03/14 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

EC42/031/14 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014 be confirmed.

EC43/03/14 Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner – Vera Baird QC

Vera Baird QC, the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner gave a presentation on her role since being elected in November 2012. She explained that she had been in post since 25 November 2013 and her role was to represent the public in relation to Northumbria Police. She had been responsible for developing a five year police and crime plan to be delivered by the Chief Constable. It was explained that the Commissioner had no input into operational matters, this fell within the remit of the Chief Constable but she had a responsibility to scrutinise the delivery of the plan. She also explained that she employed all the non police staff and had responsibility for all the buildings used by Northumbria Police.

She explained that following consultation with residents she had identified a number of priorities for inclusion in the Police and Crime Plan. These were:

- Reducing anti-social behaviour
- Community confidence
- Cutting crime
- Putting victims first
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse

She explained that cutting anti-social behaviour had not been considered as a high priority for the police in the past although it was a very high priority for members of the public. Officers would now take appropriate action in relation to reported incidents of anti-social behaviour and would visit repeat victims within the hour. A more visible presence on the street would also lead to increased community confidence and neighbourhood policing would also continue.

In respect of the cutting crime she explained that although crime levels in the area were very low a small change could make a significant difference. In the last week there had been 72 criminal damage incidents recorded in one particular area, mostly related to damage to motor vehicles.

Reference was also made to concerns about the future of the probation service.

She also referred to the role of victims in future policing. She explained that she would be responsible for the commissioning of Victim Support services in the future and was keen to avoid any potential overlaps such as in victim support and the probation service.

Reference was also made to the need to reduce sexual and domestic abuse. She explained that a pilot programme was currently being run in Sunderland where police who were called to a domestic violence incident would be accompanied by an outreach worker to provide a further level of support for the victim.

She also explained that the Council had drafted a policy in relation to countering the effects of domestic violence and aimed to provide a safe working environment. Workplace champions were to be trained to provide support for victims.

She also explained that the culture in the force had changed in relation to complaints. In the past it had been more important to get rid of the complaint as quickly as possible rather than resolve the issues raised by the complainants. There were now two people in her office who dealt with complaints against the police. They provided a rapid response to the complainant and it had been found that many of the complaints were then withdrawn.

It was explained that the budget for policing in the area had been cut by £67.0M over the past 3 years and a further £10.0M would be cut this year. This would result in a reorganisation of the various area commands and a reduction in the need for a number of area commanders. Work would also be undertaken with local authorities to locate neighbourhood stations within shared buildings to save money. There would also be a reduction in staffing levels

She explained that within the North Tyneside area there whilst had been an increase in reported incidents of domestic violence there had been a reduction in repeat offenders. There had been an increase in the number of bilking incidents from taxis and an increase in the number of burglaries although this was now coming under control. There had also been an increase in cases of shoplifting, with the most popular items stolen being alcohol, food and nappies. It had been noted that many of the people caught shoplifting were first time offenders and the police had been asked to look into the reasons for this.

Reference was made to the recent fatality in the Nile Street area of North Shields. It was suggested that a greater police presence in the area would be helpful in providing reassurance for residents. It was also explained that the police had very few camera in the area but they did have access to the small number of community safety cameras when required.

It was also suggested that further consideration should be given to combining the police services in the region. It was explained that there was a lot of collaboration going on at the moment including in the purchase of vehicles and the national police air service although there were difficulties in getting agreement on joined up working particularly in respect of computer systems.

The Chair thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner for her update

It was **agreed** that the presentation be noted

EC44/03/14 Safer North Tyneside Update

Consideration was given to a report which set out the progress made against the Safer North Tyneside 2013/14 targets. It was noted that only one target, violence with injury, was markedly off track and this had been due to above average increases in the first two quarters of the year although it was noted that the third quarter figures were 7% lower than the same period in the previous year. It was explained that North Tyneside had the lowest rate of recorded violence with injury when compared with similar community safety partnerships and was second only to Northumberland in the region. It was suggested that the increase may have been as a result of a changed pattern of drinking habits. There had also been a shift in violence occurring from the public sphere to a more domestic situation.

The milestone for criminal damage had been missed in the third quarter by 5% although it was reported that this figure showed no change from the previous quarter. Despite this North Tyneside continued to be among the best performing community safety partnerships both locally and nationally.

Members sought clarification in relation to the recording of deliberate fires and the procedures in place for signposting the ex-service community in relation to offending.

The chair thanked the officers for their report

It was **agreed** that the report be noted