

**At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 19<sup>th</sup> JULY, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Anderson in the Chair

Councillors Copeland, Curran, Emerson, Essl, Forbes, T. Martin, Scaplehorn, Thompson, D. Trueman and Wiper

**Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2011**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)**

There were no declarations of interest.

**Community Cohesion Policy Review 2011/12: Draft Scoping Report**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which put forward proposals in relation to the forthcoming policy review into community cohesion.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Stuart Douglass, Lead Policy Officer for Community Safety, presented the report and advised that this report followed on from the Scrutiny Conference in May and the previous meeting of the Committee in June. The report provided a background to community cohesion and provided the proposed terms of reference for the policy review which were detailed at paragraph 5.1 of the report.

The Sunderland Partnership had produced a Community Cohesion Strategy for the period 2008 – 2015, this was to be refreshed soon and the partnership would be waiting until after the Committee had completed its policy review before carrying out this review.

The Chairman stated that there were a lot of strategies which made up the Community Cohesion Strategy. She asked whether copies of the strategy could be provided to Members. Mr Douglass agreed to ask an officer to attend the Committee to present the strategy.

Following a query from Councillor Forbes, Mr Douglass referred to paragraph 2.8 of the report and advised that provision for young people was something that the Committee would need to look at in order to tackle the issues set out in the report.

Mr Douglass then advised, in response to the Chairman, that as part of the investigation the Committee could invite ARCH to attend to provide information around hate crimes.

Councillor T. Martin advised of an incident he had been informed of where there had been a instance of racial abuse; he had ensured that this incident had been reported to the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Group (LMAPS). Councillor Copeland added that there had been intermittent problems around Thornhill School however the issues had reduced recently.

Councillor Copeland then stated that she had attended the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations at the Bangladeshi centre and while there she had found that the Bangladeshi community was separate from the rest of the community although it seemed that they were happy to be separated. It was important to work to make them feel more a part of the community and increase their trust in the rest of the community.

Councillor Curran inquired as to whether there were any figures for incidents of racist abuse. Mr Douglass advised that he did not have the information with him so would provide a report to a future meeting which would detail the racial incidents which had occurred. He also stated that the city had an ethnically diverse population and incidents occurred across the whole of society.

The Chairman advised that figures were available and that when she had seen the figures she had been shocked by the number of hate crimes against people with disabilities. There had been a lot of work in schools to improve relations between schools; part of this work had included an event at the Stadium of Light which she had been invited to attend, unfortunately she had not been able to attend this event however Councillor T. Martin had attended.

Councillor T. Martin provided the Committee with feedback from the event, he advised of the activities the young people had performed and stated that there had been guests from the Council had attended and the young people had done a presentation for these guests. The young people had also been informed of the work of the youth parliament and had been given the opportunity to raise issues which concerned them. It had been a successful event and he thanked Leslie Etherington from Thornhill School for working hard to organise this event.

Councillor Forbes stated that the work being done in schools was fantastic and there was excellent voluntary youth provision in the city. The Blue Watch Youth Project

was looking to engage 10 to 13 year olds. She also stated that young people often did not attend activities which were held within the schools.

Councillor Emerson advised that the East Area Committee had provided funding for youth provision. People were members of many different communities at the same time and there was a need to improve the links between these different communities.

Councillor Wiper commented that in 26 years of working in the city he had seen very little in the way of racial tension apart from some minor issues in the Hendon area. It was important to be proactive to prevent issues from arising.

Councillor Thompson stated that he had attended the event at the Stadium of Light and had thought that it had been excellent. He raised the point that it was possible that the young people in attendance would be the high achievers who would be less likely to use youth clubs and may be socially excluded in school. He also advised that in 2006 he had attended an event in London and a Chief Officer from Bradford had stated that issues could escalate very quickly.

Councillor Scaplehorn stated that music was a good way to bring young people together. The Washington Area Committee had funded a concert at the skate park in Princess Anne Park which had seen approximately 500 young people attend despite the atrocious weather.

The Chairman stated that the concerts and events were good for young people. The Coalfield Area Committee was looking at youth work and the XL Youth Villages had held events within the area which had been fantastic. There was however a problem with young people hanging around in Hetton Bus Station every night; this was a difficult problem to tackle. She also referred to the Area Cohesion Groups which had representatives from all organisations within the area.

Mr Douglass stated that Community Cohesion was a broad subject. He drew Members attention to the draft terms of reference outlined in paragraph 5.1 to the report and also to the recommendations set out in paragraph 9.1.

2. RESOLVED that the scope of the Committee's policy review for 2011/12 be agreed.

### **Members Induction Session**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with the details of a proposed induction session in relation to the work of the Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Stuart Douglass, Lead Policy Officer for Community Safety, presented the report and advised Members that this was an optional session which would provide an opportunity to meet with the Safer Sunderland Partnership. It was proposed that this

session would be taking place on Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 and a draft programme had been circulated to Members.

Councillor Copeland stated that she was looking forward to this session; the new Members of the Committee might not realise how big a part the partnership plays.

The Chairman advised that Councillor Copeland had visited Durham Prison and had suggested that the Committee might be interested in visiting. She asked Councillor Copeland to brief the Committee on the visit.

Councillor Copeland, by way of introduction, advised that she used to sit on the Youth Offending Panel and approximately 18 months ago it had been suggested that a visit to the prison be undertaken, unfortunately nothing further had happened. Following on from this an individual visit had been arranged for her. She then provided feedback from her visit and advised that:

- The prison officers were happy and reported that mostly there were no issues.
- The prison was very bright however the cells were small and dark.
- The prison had recently been downgraded and was now home to short stay prisoners.
- There were a wide variety of facilities available for prisoners to use including a well used library; a chapel which catered for all religions; and a gym. There were also workshops and training rooms and officers worked to help inmates gain qualifications.
- The prisoners were working to redecorate the prison.
- Video links to the courts had been introduced to help reduce the costs associated with transporting prisoners to the courts for trial.

3. RESOLVED that consideration be given to the holding of an induction session for Members.

## **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated Members on the progress made on the implementation of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Stuart Douglass, Lead Policy Officer for Community Safety, presented the report and advised that this report followed on from the report which had been received by the Committee in February 2011. The February report detailed the key points of the bill at that time and this was summarised in paragraph 2.2.

The government were hoping that the Commissioners would be elected on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2012 with the police authorities then being abolished on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012. The House of Lords had removed the clause allowing elected Commissioners however this had then been reintroduced by the government when the bill had returned to the House of Commons.

The Home Office had announced a 60 percent funding cut for the safety partnerships and from 2015 all of the funding would go directly to the commissioner.

In London the elected Mayor already acted as the commissioner.

It had been suggested that there was the possibility that the controversial parts of the bill could be removed in order to allow the bill to be passed more quickly if necessary.

Councillor Essl stated that it would be interesting to see how the new system would work and queried who would be required to fund the elections.

Mr Douglass advised that elections were expensive to hold which was why it was proposed that they would be tied in to the existing local government elections.

Councillor Wiper stated that he was totally against the proposals as he felt that policing and politics should be kept separate from each other.

Councillor Thompson queried how long there would be between elections and Mr Douglass advised that there would be 4 years between elections with the commissioner only being able to sit for a maximum of 2 terms in office. He also advised that the policing panel would have a budget of £30,000 and from this budget the panel would need to fund all of its support.

The Chairman queried how the panels would be made up and what their functions would be. Mr Douglass responded that there would be at least 1 representative from each Local Authority on the panel and there would be a minimum of 11 members with a maximum of 20.

Councillor Thompson stated that the Chief Police Officers were highly experienced police officers and he was concerned that it would be possible for people with very little experience to be elected.

Mr Douglass advised that it would be possible that this could happen however the role of the commissioner was not to influence operational policing; although they would have the power to appoint the Chief Constable. There were discussions underway around the possibility of giving the commissioners a wider role.

In response to a query from Councillor Scaplehorn Mr Douglass advised that the Home Office grant was being cut and the partnership would be losing funding of around £65,000 this year.

Councillor Scaplehorn then expressed concerns that the work of the partnership would be reduced by this cut in funding and was advised by Mr Douglass that the Safer Sunderland Board were looking at the situation. Mr Douglass also advised, following further questioning from Councillor Scaplehorn, that there would be changes to policing in the Northumbria force area; neighbourhoods would still have their community policing although it was likely there would be cuts made at senior management level.

The Chairman asked that the Committee be kept informed of the progress being made and thanked Mr Douglass for his report.

It was then:-

4. RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

### **Drug Misuse – Update**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update of the current national and local framework for tackling drug misuse and which also informed Members of the current challenges in Sunderland and the interventions in place to reduce drug taking and drug related crime and harm.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Leanne Davis, Associate Policy Lead for Community Safety, introduced the report and delivered a presentation which provided an overview of the new national drug strategy and the situation in Sunderland.

Ms Davis advised that the population of problematic drug users in Sunderland was a small proportion of the population and stayed about the same size. There had been an increase in cocaine use among these problem drug users and this had been attributed to a shortage of heroin which had lead to people using cocaine instead.

It was estimated that in Sunderland there were 1109 adults who were problematic drug users; a problematic drug user was defined as someone who used heroin or crack cocaine while a non-problematic drug user was someone who used any other drug. At the end of 2010/11 there were 910 problematic drug users accessing structured drug treatment in Sunderland and a further 378 non-problematic drug users accessing treatment.

The Chairman stated that this was an important issue and it was good that this background information was being provided to the Committee as there were a number of new Members on the Committee.

Councillor Copeland stated that there were clinics in Southwick which dispensed methadone and since these had opened there had been an increase in crime in the area. She was aware that the government were trying to keep people from using methadone and asked whether there had been any progress with this. She also queried when the methadone programmes would end and how long the waiting lists were.

Ms Davis advised that the funding had fortunately been retained for the coming year; there were people already receiving methadone treatment and for these people methadone needed to remain an option. There was a three week target for treatment; users must be seen within three weeks of being referred to the programme.

Councillor Essl queried how many of the 1109 problematic drug users in the city were actually from the city and how many were imported by the hostels and also how the figure compared with other cities.

Ms Davis advised that 1109 was not a particularly high number, Newcastle and Middlesbrough had many more problem drug users. In Sunderland there was also a large number of the drug users were in treatment. Individuals who were from outside of the area were a real concern; there was a need to identify those who did not have a connection to the city and there was a need to look at whether housing should be provided for them within the city.

In response to a query from Councillor Thompson, Ms Davis advised that there was work to prevent drug driving including the testing of individuals who were suspected of driving under the influence of drugs. It was intended that this would prevent people from getting behind the wheel when under the influence. If caught there were a lot of risks including the potential for the loss of employment and transport if convicted.

The Chairman asked for clarification of which classification cannabis was and was advised by Ms Davis that it was class B and had been downgraded to class C between 2004 and 2008. The Chairman also stated that there had been a lot of publicity around the work on tackling cannabis farms.

Councillor Forbes referred to housing and stated that it could be difficult for people to return home after being in treatment. She also queried how the police worked across the force borders to tackle issues.

Ms Davis advised that it was known that housing was a real issue. Some users did not have homes and ended up living in hostels. There was a need to ensure that the families of users were kept safe and there was work being done in the hospitals with maternity services to identify mothers with drug addictions to ensure that there were services in place for the baby. With regard to policing Ms Davis advised that where possible information was passed around to tackle emerging issues such as online sales of drugs. The A19 was a focal point of cross border working as the road travelled through several force areas.

Councillor Emerson commented that last year there had been a briefing from the Police Drug Liaison Officer and during this briefing Members had been informed that not every cannabis user moved onto heroin use however all heroin users started by taking cannabis.

The Chairman thanked Ms Davis for her presentation and it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the update be received and noted.

## **Work Programme 2011-12**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided, for Members information, the current work programme for the Committee's work for the 2011-12 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

6. RESOLVED that the work programme be received and noted.

### **Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the period 1 July 2011 – 31 October 2011**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1 July 2011 – 31 October 2011 which relate to the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

(Signed) F. ANDERSON,  
Chairman.