

At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 9TH MARCH, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Heron in the Chair

Councillors Copeland, Paul Maddison, Speding, Timmins and J. Walton.

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Tate

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Ball, Morrisey, O'Connor, Scaplehorn and D. Smith.

Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 9th February, 2010

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 9th February, 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

Policy Review – Anti Social Behaviour – Evidence Gathering

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide further evidence as part of the Committee's study into the work being undertaken by the Safer Sunderland Partnership into tackling anti social behaviour in the City.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

As part of the evidence gathering process, Gillian Thirlwell, Branch Manager, and Amy Anderson, Outreach Worker (Victim Support), provided a Powerpoint presentation on their work to help support the victims of anti social behaviour and

other crimes, in doing so, working closely with key partners such as the Council, housing providers and Northumbria Police.

Bill Blackett, ASB Strategy Manager, informed the Committee that £54,000 had been given to Sunderland Partnership, of which £30,000 was to be used for a Victim Support Officer to work out of the Council's Anti Social Behaviour Unit.

In relation to the service provided by Victim Support, the Chairman commented it had greatly improved as past problems had been that victims had no-one to talk with.

Councillor Copeland commented that through her experiences with Victim Support, she had nothing but praise for the excellent service that they provided.

In response to Councillor Speding's query, Ms. Anderson advised that an incident did not have to be reported to the Police for Victim Support to become involved.

Ms. Anderson also responded to Councillor Speding's query, advising that there was an overlap in services with Domestic Violence and Wearside Women in Need, but those were specific services whereas Victim Support was open to everyone.

Ms. Anderson informed the Committee that they did carry out proactive work such as attend resident groups, help centres, provide newsletters, community consultation events for feedback and a quality of service was carried out with each individual victim to make sure they had received the best care possible.

In relation to the statistics, Ms. Anderson advised that through Back on the Map they had received £36,000 funding for a two year period, during that time they had been able to generate funds of almost £250,000 proving the service was sustainable.

The Chairman commented that the service covered a massive role now and it had moved on at a pace, but needed to keep striving to do so.

The Chairman wished to thank Victim Support for their excellent work and commented that the Council would look to see where they could help bolster the service.

The report also informed the Committee of recent visits Members had undertook to the Winter Weekend XL Villages, Area Policing Teams and G45 Electronic Tagging System.

The Chairman advised he had requested Andy Neal, Interim YDG Manager, to provide a scoping paper on the work of the XL Youth Villages and the effects they had on the crime statistics.

In relation to paragraph 4.9 of the report, Alan Caddick, Head of Housing, commented that it should read 'The proactive approach of housing providers such as Gentoo was applauded but it was noted that more needed to be done in relation to the actions of some private rented landlords'.

Mr. Caddick advised that many of the private landlords were very good and if Members wished, information on private landlord enforcement could be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

Mr. Caddick also advised of the selective licensing scheme at Hendon which would be in place from 1st July to try and tackle the worst offenders so Members may also wish to receive further information on the issue.

The Chairman advised that Members may appreciate a report with further details on the proposal as there had been requests for the scheme to be introduced in other areas.

In response to Councillor Paul Maddison's query, Mr. Caddick advised that it may be possible to provide a breakdown of the worst areas for private landlord issues.

In response to Councillor Copeland's query, Mr. Caddick advised that the Council did have certain powers should landlords not allow inspections of properties.

In relation to the issue of dealing with empty properties, Councillor Speding commented that he felt it was a fragmented process and a more direct approach was needed, almost like a compulsory purchase order, which the Council had performed in the past.

Mr. Caddick advised that the Council was trying to carry out a more direct approach through their enforcement policies, but due to the cost, had to do so selectively. Mr. Caddick also advised that a great deal of landlords lived off shore, therefore were difficult to deal with.

2. RESOLVED that the evidence submitted be noted and that a future report on private landlords be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Programme

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an overview on key delivery areas of the Home Office Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Programme to improve public confidence in the criminal justice system.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In relation to the Policing Pledge, Inspector Paul Barrett advised that the police in Sunderland had been ahead of the game, therefore the pledge was a gentle step.

With regards to the advertising of sentences being passed down, caution was needed so that resources were not spent having to protect criminals once they were back in the community.

Inspector Barrett also informed the Committee that the Police were looking to tackle anti social behaviour through prevention, intelligence and enforcement. Foot patrols

had been increased; school initiatives to educate children were underway alongside the long term approach of the Respect Scheme.

The Chairman commented that he was most impressed with the Policing Pledge and it had been very successful in his area and hoped people would not criticise the Police should they fall short of the high standards they had set.

In response to Councillor Paul Maddison's query, Sue Kelly, Technical Support Assistant, advised that the victims champion had not been a victim of crime herself but had worked within the Magistrates Court so not only had an extensive knowledge of the criminal justice system but also had seen the impact crime had on the victims.

Councillor Copeland commented that through the agencies working together more, the crime rates had reduced and that she was happy with the pledge, but was still having problems with anti social behaviour and drinking in her area. Councillor Copeland reiterated her desire for alcohol free zones.

Inspector Barrett advised that they should not need the alcohol free zones as they could deal with the people before they became drunk and disorderly through the Direction to Leave powers.

Inspector Barrett also advised in regard to their aims to reinvigorate the Neighbourhood Watch Schemes with recent figures indicating 75% of people wished to become involved and the Police were looking at different levels of engagement with the public.

Councillor Speding referred to the publicising of offenders and commented that he believed people had a right to know if a criminal was living in their street.

Councillor Speding also commented that to get 10 pledges from the Police was phenomenal and needed to be publicised much more than just the Sunderland Echo.

Ms. Kelly agreed that if a person was a victim of crime they would want to hear of how offenders were being dealt with and the publicising of sentences was a Home Office approach based on what the public had requested.

In relation to the Policing Pledge, Ms. Kelly advised that much more promotion had been carried out than in other areas, such as road shows, DVDs, radio interviews and newsletters.

Councillor Speding appreciated the level of promotion carried out and commented that he felt the most visible promotion was for the public to see officers on the beat and hoped these initiatives would be permanent so that the public could start to recognise those same officers.

The Chairman commented on the community links of the CSOs which had been a good model and that he would like to see Police Officers engaging with people whilst on foot patrols.

Councillor Copeland commented that she was most pleased, having attended a meeting with the Police, Gentoo and residents, who had showed great enthusiasm to be involved in implementing Neighbourhood Watch Schemes which were starting to have an effect.

Inspector Barrett advised that in the past schemes and initiatives had only been delivered over a short period. As they were starting a new way of policing across Sunderland, they were looking at longer term plans. Consideration was to be given on planned patrols and their routes to greatly increase officer coverage and more engagement to increase public confidence.

The Chairman commented that the Policing Pledge was very bold and had been effective with the statistics for fear of crime dropping dramatically. In relation to the PACT meetings, the Chairman stressed that Members needed to report any incidents straight away, rather than waiting for the next meeting which ran on a 5 week cycle.

The Chairman also commented on the highly visible Community Payback Scheme, advising that he had used the service and that whilst the offenders were quite young, they had been quite responsible and he recommended Members to use the service.

Councillor Copeland commented that she was proud of the Community Payback Scheme and she would like to see it continue as the public were working with the Police much better now.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Kelly and Inspector Barrett for their attendance and wished to complement the Partnership for their work with organisations such as Victim Support.

3. RESOLVED that:-

- i) Members raise awareness of the key elements of the crime and justice programme in their localities and support the next phase of the programme.
- ii) the report be received and noted.

Integrated Offender Management – Implementation

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an overview on the implementation of integrated offender management in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Louise Hill, Reducing Re-offending Manager, presented the report and was on hand to answer Members' queries.

In response to Councillor Paul Maddison's query, Ms. Hill advised that repeat offenders who had been in and out of the justice system, causing nuisance rather

than high risk, tended to be the best type of offender to respond to the programme, so long as they were prepared to change.

In response to Councillor Copeland's query, Ms. Hill advised that if a person did not have employment or accommodation, they were more likely to re-offend so incentives were offered, with consequences, should the person not follow the rules.

Ms. Hill also advised of the Back to You programme which helped offenders manage their finances better and the recruitment of a new Probation Officer would strengthen links with the prisons to try and break the revolving door cycle.

The Chairman commented that new initiatives were to be introduced which would be key to the work undertaken by the Community and Safer City Committee.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Groups (LMAPS) and Anti Social Behaviour (ASB)

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an overview on the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Groups (LMAPS), including their contribution to resolving ASB issues.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Speding raised concerns over the problem the Council and Police have in dealing with parking on footpaths outside of schools etc. and suggested this may be something LMAPS could look at.

Inspector Barrett advised that the main concerns had been drinking, dog fouling, speeding etc. and the purpose of the groups was to deal with issues important to the public, and it may be the forum to discuss the issues of parking on footways.

The Chairman agreed that it may be a suitable forum to discuss the issue but also advised that people could phone the Council if they had a parking problem who could then contact the Police for local teams if necessary.

Mr. Douglas commented that the Committee may wish for further information from City Services on recording and monitoring problems.

The Chairman commented that the LMAPS had been a huge success, having an effect on the whole City and was credited to the excellent organisation of the group.

The Chairman also requested a report on the violent crime figures to consider where things were going wrong.

Mr. Douglass advised that current statistics showed that figures were falling in relation to violent crime and the situation continued to improve.

Mr. Douglass also advised of the Violent Crime Delivery Group and that a report on their work could be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

5. RESOLVED that the report and Members' comments be received and noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1 March 2010 – 30 June 2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to update Members on the position with regard to the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1 March 2010 to 30 June 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Work Programme 2009-10

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing for Members' information, the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2009/10 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the information contained in the Work Programme be noted.

(Signed) R. HERON,
Chairman.