

**At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 6<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor T. Martin in the Chair

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

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Anderson and Copeland.

**Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2011**

Councillor Thompson stated that he had actually referred to a power struggle between senior politicians and senior police officers; not that the police were struggling as had been recorded on page 8 of the minutes.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the above amendment.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**Community Cohesion Policy Review 2011/12: Evidence Gathering**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with feedback on the attendance of Members at the Show Racism the Red Card event at the Stadium of Light and also provided feedback from the Members visit to Durham Prison.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and drew Members attention to the information which was contained in the report relating to the Show Racism the Red Card event and the Members visit to Durham Prison.

The Chairman commented that the Show Racism the Red Card event was an excellent way of getting the message across to the young people in the city. It had been a fantastic event and had got the best out of the young people who had attended. He hoped that the good work would continue.

Councillor Wiper stated that he had been impressed by how the workshop had been run.

The Chairman circulated a short report detailing his views on the visit to Durham Prison which had taken place. He had noticed that there was a relaxed, friendly atmosphere however there was a lack of privacy and space in the cells. The educational facilities were excellent; there was an ICT suite where prisoners were being taught computing skills as well as training to enable them to apply for work once released. There was also training in practical skills such as bricklaying.

Councillor Emerson commented that there was a lot of work was put into providing support for prisoners who were approaching the end of their sentence. The prisoners doing the bricklaying course were working towards their NVQs and a lot of them wanted to be able to continue this training after being released in order to achieve the higher level NVQs.

Councillor Curran commented on how good he felt the education and ICT facilities were.

Councillor Scaplehorn stated that it had been good that there had not been any restrictions placed on the visiting Members and that they had been able to freely talk to the prisoners. It had been a real eye opener to see the conditions within the prison; especially how small the cells were and the lack of privacy.

The Chairman added that this was a limitation of the prison being a Victorian Prison however the facilities were excellent.

2. RESOLVED that consideration be given to the updates which are to be included in the Committee's Policy Review into Community Cohesion.

### **Performance Report Quarters 1 and 2 (April – September 2011)**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with a performance update for the period April to September 2011.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Kelly Davison-Pullan, Lead Officer for Corporate Performance, presented the report and advised that the way performance was monitored had changed. The government had deleted the National Indicator Set and it was intended that

authorities would be more self regulating using local priorities as the basis for the reporting.

The Appendix to the report detailed the indicators which were relevant to this Committee and provided the figures on the performance against these indicators.

The Chairman queried the reference to feelings of safety within communities and the city as a whole. Julie Smith, Associate Policy Lead for Community Safety, advised that people found it easier to relate to their local area and as such felt safer than when looking at the city as a whole when they based their feelings on their perceptions of the city; as it was harder for people to relate it was more difficult for them to state whether they felt safe or not. There had been improvements in safety in the city since 2008. The residents had been surveyed by using a system of telephone surveying.

The Chairman then asked about the massive increase in reoffending by young people which the figures showed. Ms Davison-Pullan advised that for 2010/11 there had been a reduction in reoffending. There had been a significant reduction in the number of young people who had entered the criminal justice system.

The Chairman then referred to the stable performance for the percentage of offenders who at the end of their probation period were in employment; he felt that this was excellent especially given the current economic conditions which made it harder for people to find employment.

Ms Smith advised that there had been a lot of work around reducing offending and getting offenders into employment, education or training. The staff at the job centre were working with offenders to help them to gain employment.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that this was a very positive report. In Washington there had been noticeable improvements in visual policing over the last 2 years; he hoped that the good work would continue across the city.

Councillor Emerson stated that the Neighbourhood Policing Teams did an excellent job and that residents felt safer when the teams were patrolling. He felt that there was a need to look into the possibility of increasing the coverage of the teams. He also stated that young people had raised the same concerns as adults around feelings of safety.

3. RESOLVED that the performance update be noted.

## **Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Update**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an overview of Emergency Planning and Business Continuity and explained how the Council met its statutory requirements under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Barry Frost, Security and Emergency Planning Manager, presented the report and advised the Committee of the roles of central government, the Northern Resilience Team, Northumbria Local Resilience Forum and the Council; details of the work of the different organisations being detailed in section 3 of the report.

Mr Frost also advised of the Council's current position in the three main areas they were required to take responsibility for under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and advised Members of some of the plans the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Team were responsible for.

In response to queries from Councillor Wiper, Mr Frost advised that there were close links with Members and the Community. In the event of an incident the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Team would respond immediately and would keep the Chief Executive informed of all developments. The Chief Executive would then liaise with the Leader of the Council.

The Chairman queried how the team communicated with other agencies and was informed by Mr Frost that there were radios and direct telephone lines which could be used to contact the necessary agencies.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **The Neighbourhood Helpline**

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an overview of the work of the Neighbourhood Helpline.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Liz St Louis, Head of Customer Service & Development, presented the report and advised Members that the Neighbourhood Helpline had come about as an evolution of the 101 non emergency number and had been set up in partnership with Newcastle City Council. In April 2011 Newcastle had withdrawn from the partnership however Sunderland had continued to provide the service.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that last year there had been some concerns over calls not being logged properly; there had been an assurance given that changes would be made. He asked whether the changes had been implemented.

Ms St. Louis advised that the procedures had been changed and there were now very strict rules in place to ensure that all issues raised were properly addressed.

In response to a query from Councillor Curran, Ms St. Louis advised that there were strict timescales for responses.

The Chairman recounted some of his experiences of using the service. A resident had contacted him regarding a street light which was not working in a back lane in the Long Streets area and had lead to vandalism due to the dark area created. The

issue had been dealt with extremely quickly after being reported using the neighbourhood helpline.

5. RESOLVED that the report 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 December 2011 – 31 March 2012**

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 December 2011 – 31 March 2012 which relate to the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman advised that there were no items on the current forward plan which fell under the remit of the Committee.

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

(Signed) T. MARTIN,  
Chairman.