

At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER, 2009 AT 5.30 P.M.

Present:-

Councillor E. Ball in the Chair

Councillors Copeland, Paul Maddison, O'Connor, Scaplehorn, Speding, Timmins, Wake and J. Walton

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Heron.

Minutes of the last meeting held on 13th October, 2009

Stuart Douglass, Safer Communities Manager, advised the Committee in relation to the 30 extra Police Officers and that 15 had already been recruited and were working with the Neighbourhood Teams and the remaining 15 officers were in the process of being recruited.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 13th October, 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

Item 5 – Policy Review into Anti Social Behaviour – Gentoo's Approach to Neighbourhood Safety

Councillor O'Connor declared a personal interest in the item as a board member of Gentoo Group Limited.

Order of Business

The Chairman proposed that the Committee hear items 4 and 5 on the agenda before the meeting be opened up for discussion.

2. RESOLVED that the order of business on the agenda be varied accordingly.

Policy Review – Evidence from the Neighbourhood Renewal Team

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an overview of the work of the Council's Anti Social Behaviour Unit and the contribution made by the Unit to the Safer Sunderland Strategy.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Policy Review into Anti Social Behaviour – Gentoo's Approach to Neighbourhood Safety

The Managing Director of Gentoo, Sunderland submitted a report and gave a Powerpoint presentation (copy circulated) to outline Gentoo Sunderland's approach to Neighbourhood Safety, highlight key performance outputs over the last full year (2008-09), active partnership working and current and future developments. The report would feed into the Committee's evidence gathering process in relation to its study into Anti Social Behaviour.

(For copy report and presentation – see original minutes).

Councillor Copeland enquired if residents were notified of the relocation of problem tenants into their area.

Michelle Meldrum, Gentoo Sunderland, advised that a person being relocated would only be moved under a structured support plan involving a number of agencies and that the individual had to be prepared to change their behaviour otherwise the situation would require eviction. It was considered that such intervention strategies were largely successful.

Councillor Speding commented that one of the causes of anti social behaviour may be due to the disrepair of empty properties owned by unregistered landlords.

Alan Caddick, Head of Housing, advised that there were powers around the enforcement of dealing with empty properties which attract anti social behaviour such as Compulsory Purchase Orders and so on. These do take time but manage to get the properties back into use.

In response to Councillor Speding's query Louise Butler, Neighbourhood Relations Team Leader, advised that there were powers within the Housing Act which the Authority could use to take action against those landlords whose properties were displaying acts of anti social behaviour.

In response to Councillor Wake's query, in relation paragraph 3.3 Family Intervention Project, Mr. Caddick advised that the average £17,000 costs for work with each family was based on national figures and should families not

receive the service the costs to the Council in relation to other areas such as Homelessness and Children's Services would be around £250,000.

The key theme of the service was about working with families in trying to keep them together.

Councillor J. Walton enquired as to how the Drink Banning Orders worked, as mentioned in paragraph 4.3.

Mr. Douglass advised that it was a new Order which the Police and the Council could apply for through the Magistrates' Court. An amendment was being made to the Constitution which would enable the Council to use the Order.

If a person was to be arrested on two separate occasions for Anti Social Behaviour whilst under the influence of alcohol, such evidence could be presented to the Magistrates' Court to ban the individual from City Centre bars for a period for up to two years. If the individual was found to be in breach of the Order, then it would become a criminal offence.

Councillor Copeland commented that she would like to see the Drink Banning Orders implemented as soon as possible due to a number of Anti Social Behaviour problems occurring within her Ward.

Mr. Douglass advised that the Council would be looking at the Orders as soon as it could and that the Police may be able to apply for the Order in relation to Councillor Copeland's specific issue.

Councillor O'Connor commented that it was pleasing to see the Council and Gentoo working together and was impressed with the way the issue of anti social behaviour was being tackled.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that intervention/prevention was the way forward in tackling the issue and believed Gentoo and the Council should be applauded for their efforts and he would also like to see the Police have a greater input.

Ian Porter, Managing Director, Gentoo, commented that accurate data capture was really important in identifying where the issues were occurring and putting prevention measures in place.

Work was also underway with Andy Neal of the Youth Development Group on implementing diversionary activities. Perceptions of anti social behaviour were also a major issue being addressed.

The Chairman commented that there was a great deal of good work being done and thanked officers for their reports.

3. RESOLVED that both reports be received and noted.

Feedback from Conference – The Future of Scrutiny – Tackling the Big Issues

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with feedback from the LGA Conference "The Future of Scrutiny – Tackling the Big Issues".

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Jim Diamond, Review Co-ordinator, advised that if Members required any additional information that he could be contacted outside of the meeting.

4. RESOLVED that the Committee note the feedback from the LGA Conference "The Future of Scrutiny – Tackling the Big Issues".

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st November – 28th February 2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st November 2009 – 28th February 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) E. BALL,
Chairman.