

At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 8TH DECEMBER, 2009 AT 5.30 P.M.

Present:-

Councillor Heron in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Copeland, Paul Maddison, Scaplehorn and J. Walton

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors O'Connor, Speding, Timmins and Wake.

Minutes of the last meeting held on 10th November, 2009

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 10th November, 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

Study into Anti Social Behaviour – Tackling Deliberate and Anti Social Fires

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) for Members to receive an update from John Allison, District Officer, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, on the issue of deliberate and anti social fires in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Allison advised of the Phoenix Project and the funding received from Area Committees.

In response to Councillor J. Walton's query, Mr. Allison advised that the costs of £422,343 referred to in paragraph 2.3 was the economic costs of deliberate fires which takes into account the attendance of the Police, fire and health authorities and so on.

Mr. Allison also advised that they had operated under service wide plans in the past and now used district wide plans which had more specific targets for each station and gave the flexibility to deal with hotspots.

Councillor Copeland enquired if figures could be provided comparing arson figures in the Southwick area over the last eight years.

Mr. Allison advised that he would supply the information outside of the meeting and informed the Committee of the reductions in fires for the first quarter of this year.

Councillor Copeland enquired if the reductions were due to Gentoo having demolished empty homes.

Mr. Allison commented that there had been a problem with homes standing empty. The time scales for disconnecting utilities to these properties had been vastly reduced to enable the homes to be demolished sooner.

In response to Councillor Ball's query, Mr. Allison advised that they had increased patrols, directed CCTV cameras and increased the fencing around the Black Road area, which had reduced the number of fires being started.

2. RESOLVED that the report be received, noted and included as part of the Committee's study into anti social behaviour in Sunderland.

The Neighbourhood Helpline

The Head of Customer Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide 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 and Development, presented the report and distributed maps detailing hotspot areas.

The Chairman commented that the service had been running for quite some time and that he was surprised at how much it was used.

In response to Councillor Paul Maddison's query, Ms. St. Louis advised that a regular breakdown of the data may be available in the future and she would keep Members updated on the issue.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that at a recent meeting with officers of the Police, he was surprised to hear that 101 calls on breach of licences were not passed on to the Police.

Ms. St. Louis advised that full details are taken and passed on to the Service Delivery Teams who determine the best appropriate action and who needed to be involved.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that Members and Police opposing the grant of a License would need the number of calls in relation to licensing breaches, and if these incidents were not being passed on, the issue needed to be addressed.

The Chairman commented that during Licensing Committees the Police are required to provide reports of the calls received in respect of premises, so this may need to be reviewed.

Ms. St. Louis advised that she would take Members' comments on board and speak with the Service Delivery Team, as they may already provide such details.

Councillor Copeland expressed her gratitude for the service provided by staff and commented that the area had benefited from the service.

Ms. St. Louis advised that she would pass those comments on to the staff.

Councillor Paul Maddison suggested that those Members unable to attend the meeting be sent copies of the maps detailing hotspots.

The Chairman proposed that the Committee receive regular updates on 101 figures.

3. RESOLVED that:-

- i) copies of the hotspot maps be circulated to all Members of the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee;
- ii) a regular update on 101 figures be brought back to the Committee; and
- iii) the report be received and noted.

Violent Crime Delivery Plan 2009/2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to update the Committee on developments in relation to tackling violent crime and to consider the progress being made by the Safer Sunderland Partnership in meeting the Violent Crime Delivery Plan 2009-2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Stuart Douglass, Safer Communities Manager, introduced Kelly Henderson, Safer Communities Officer, and they were on hand to address Members' queries.

The Chairman enquired if there was a problem with honour crimes and forced marriages in the region.

Mr. Douglass advised that he did not have the exact figures but they were very low. He was aware that Wearside Women in Need had helped women in such situations but they may not have been from the area.

Regardless of how few incidents recorded in the region, officers were still trained and prepared to deal with the issues if they were to occur.

The Chairman commented that there were a number of refugees in the area and he was not convinced that the figures were correct as yet. The Chairman also enquired if places like Newcastle would take in cases of abuse from Sunderland and vice versa.

Mr. Douglass advised that exchanges are performed when there are serious cases of harm.

Ms. Henderson commented that Wearside Women in Need regularly take on out of City applicants.

In relation to the crime figures, Councillor Paul Maddison enquired if any consultation had been made with students.

Mr. Douglass advised that the issue of student safety is examined through LMAPS and there were issues of burglary of which actions had been put in place.

Monday student nights had not seen any increase in crime. The Police had put extra patrols on, so measures were taken to reduce potential risks.

Councillor Copeland commented on the excellent work done by Gentoo Officers trained in dealing with domestic violence, who actively encouraged victims to come forward. The service should be advertised more.

Ms. Henderson advised that they had close working relationships with those officers from Gentoo and also partnership working with Sunderland University in publicising and getting information into the public domain.

In relation to the figures on feelings of safety in the City Centre at night, Councillor J. Walton enquired as to the remaining 25% not mentioned.

Mr. Douglass advised that the people who commented they neither feel safe or unsafe would fall into the 25% not mentioned. Mr. Douglass also informed the Committee that this was an area that could be improved but on the positive side, the gaps were being closed on the Black and ethnic groups' feelings of safety.

Councillor Copeland stressed that the street scene of Fawcett Street needed to be addressed to improve people's perception of safety.

Mr. Douglass advised that work was ongoing on street scenes and he would pass Councillor Copeland's comments on to the relevant officer.

The Chairman advised that there was an ongoing City Centre Plan and he would ask Keith Lowes, Head of Planning and Environment, to send Councillor Copeland a copy.

In relation to the Crime Delivery Plan Councillor Scaplehorn commented that officers should be applauded for the excellent work.

The Chairman commented that the Committee needed to identify what was not working as well as what was working, so that these issues could be looked at and thanked officers for their excellent reports.

4. RESOLVED that the Committee note the progress being made by the Safer Sunderland Partnership in relation to delivering violent crime prevention and reduction and support the Violent Crime Delivery Plan 2009-2010.

Safer Sunderland Partnership Forum – Feedback

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with a feedback on the annual Safer Sunderland Partnership Forum that was held on 23rd October, 2009 in the Stadium of Light, Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman commented that the day had provided a great deal of good feedback but there were not enough roving microphones.

Mr. Douglass advised that it was an annual event, which was an opportunity for public attendance and this had been the first time Scrutiny had been involved.

Mr. Douglass also advised that they would welcome Scrutiny to be involved in planning future events.

5. RESOLVED that the feedback report from the Forum be noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st December, 2009 – 31st March, 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 December, 2009 – 31st March, 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The Chairman wished everyone a Merry Christmas and closed the meeting.

(Signed) R. HERON,
Chairman.