

**At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 13<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2009 AT 5.30 P.M.**

**Present:-**

Councillor R. Heron in the Chair

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

**Also in attendance:-**

Councillor Tate.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Ball, Copeland, Scaplehorn and D. Smith.

**Minutes of the last meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2009**

Councillor J. Walton referred to previous comments on the introduction of 30 extra police officers. This issue had been mentioned to an officer at the Fulwell Neighbourhood Watch meeting who knew nothing of the subject.

Stuart Douglass, Safer Communities Manager, advised that it may be that the budgets had to be agreed upon and that particular officer was not aware of the situation. Mr. Douglass advised that he would look into the situation and notify Members.

The Chairman informed the Committee on the response Councillor Copeland had received from Northumbria Probation in relation to Community Payback. The response detailed that during a review of the structure of the group's undertaking Community Payback projects, it was identified that supervisors would be able to safely manage six offenders rather than five. This small change within each group would not affect the total number of Community Payback hours on the projects completed, but was a more efficient and cost effective way of working.

This meant that whilst the same amount of Community Payback work was being undertaken, fewer supervisors would be required overall and unfortunately, those that had temporary contracts would not be renewed.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

### **Gambling Act 2005 – Approval of amendments to the Council's Statement of Principles**

The Chief Solicitor and Executive Director of City Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated) to seek the advice and consideration of the Committee on a report to be considered by Cabinet on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2009. The report set out the revised Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor J. Walton queried the paragraph which reads:-

If individuals wish to approach Councillors to ask them to represent their views, care should be taken that the Councillors are not part of the Licensing Committee.

Tom Terrett, Trading Standards and Licensing Manager, advised that Members were entitled to make representations in their own right. If a member of the public had concerns their Ward Councillor could speak on their behalf but could not then be part of the decision making process if they were on the Licensing Committee. There had to be a separation of Members speaking against an application and then making a decision on it.

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and the comments of the Committee be referred to Cabinet.

### **National Drug Strategy**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with:-

- i) an overview of Drugs: Protecting Families and Communities;
- ii) an overview of progress against all four priority areas contained within the strategy, and to
- iii) seek support to continue with all work plans.

Leanne Davis, Drug and Alcohol Strategy Manager, presented the report and was on hand to answer Members' queries.

Councillor Wake enquired as to how the identified drug dens were made impossible to use again, as mentioned in the report.

Ms. Davis advised that LMAP's would tend to the area, removing any overgrown foliage, etc. to make the location more visible. Engagement with young people in the area would also be implemented.

Councillor Wake advised that after a recent discussion with a Police Inspector he had been informed that, in relation to the 101 scheme, statistics on ASB had been given to the Police, however, under the new scheme they had not, and there seemed to be a break in the chain of information.

Mr. Douglass suggested that as the Committee were to review ASB, the 101 issue could be explored further at a future meeting.

Ms. Davis advised that information on drug related litter hotspots was being received and further engagement could be implemented through LMAP's if it is a police matter.

Councillor O'Connor commented that there had been a number of drug busts in the area and he believed the reason they could go undetected for so long was due to letting agencies/landlords taking 12 months rent, rather than on a month to month basis.

Ms. Davis agreed and advised that work to target landlords through charging for clean up services and so on was being undertaken. It was hoped this would initiate a greater responsibility from landlords.

Ms. Davis noted the leaflets showing the damage caused through the use of Cannabis farms were to be produced and circulated to landlords.

The Chairman enquired on Councillor Copeland's behalf on the treatment of methadone to drug users.

Ms. Davis advised that there were strict guidelines which GPs had to follow on the use of methadone. The amount of methadone prescribed was dependent on how much heroin the user was taking.

The length of the prescription would be over a number of years and would be dispensed and supervised by a pharmacist.

Ms. Davis also advised that there were alternative drugs to methadone which could be prescribed.

The Chairman commented that he was surprised at the length of time methadone was prescribed for, but was pleased to see that support and guidance for the families of drug users was being addressed.

Councillor Wake commented that he was pleased to see that there was an alternative drug available other than methadone as he was aware of reports that methadone was more addictive than heroin.

3. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the report and the overview of the national drug strategy and the work that is ongoing to implement it in Sunderland be received and noted;
- ii) that the issue of the 101 number statistics be investigated under the Anti Social Behaviour Review at a future meeting of the Committee.

### **Policy Review Consultation – Safer Sunderland Partnership Forum**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with a briefing on the annual Safer Sunderland Partnership Forum.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Douglass advised that as well as the item on Anti Social Behaviour, it may be of interest to Members to discuss items on justice and drugs, etc. if they so wish at the forum.

The Chairman commented that Members needed to give consideration to whether they have their own session or move around to other sessions which may flag up areas this Committee had not considered.

Councillor Wake commented that the last event had operated on a carousel basis to discuss each issue and requested that if this were the case again, that the timings be more flexible to enable more consideration of each item.

Mr. Douglass advised that there had been many similar comments in relation to the last event and that the number of carousels would be reduced and the timings for presentations/discussions would be increased.

4. RESOLVED that the arrangements for the Forum and role of Members as part of the consultation exercise for its study be noted.

### **Poverty of Place**

Sal Buckler, Diversity and Inclusion Manager submitted a report (copy circulated) to highlight to the Committee current research as regards poverty in place in relation to understanding community safety and the relationship with community cohesion.

It was also suggested that the Committee undertake a site visit to both an area where poverty of place was currently having an adverse effect and an

area where environmental work has had a positive impact upon community cohesion.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Speding commented that he believed there was often a problem of co-ordination between directorates and enquired if the process would bring about a more joined up approach to dealing with such issues.

Ms. Buckler agreed that there was an issue but there was a movement of change and people were starting to see how things were joining up.

Ms. Buckler commented that she believed this to be an opportunity to see what the issues were and engage in partnership working.

Councillor Wake commented that he believed the appearance of litter in a particular street was not necessarily an indication of poverty.

Ms. Buckler advised that recent research had identified a very real link between levels of poverty and the way that a place looks.

It had been demonstrated that there is a direct connection to what a place looks like and how much money is circulated within the community.

The Chairman commented that there was a problem in that politicians may be able to identify issues, but cannot deal with them until certain legislation is in place, which results in ongoing issues and delays.

Councillor Wake referred to a recent definition of poverty which stated that a child was living in poverty if they did not have a TV, mobile phone, etc. Councillor Wake commented that he found this offensive when there were children starving in the World.

Councillor Speding commented that he believed the research was sound and that the poverty lines were always being redrawn. The biggest driver was establishing what was to be done next.

Councillor O'Connor commented that everyone had experienced poverty in their Wards and would like to attend a site visit to the areas recommended.

The Chairman proposed that if Members were to agree, the visit be arranged for an afternoon, so that the area could be viewed in daylight.

5. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the report be received and noted;
- ii) a) The Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee invite Members of both the Environment and Attractive City and the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committees to accompany

them on a site visit to look at areas where poverty of place was evident and also projects where it was being addressed.

- b) Suggested areas included Fence Houses, where at the LMAPS there is a repeated concern with community cohesion and community safety issues arising from poor environmental availability.
- c) Also Hendon Community Allotment where a project by Groundwork is actively addressing some of these issues.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Handbook**

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with a progress report on the refresh of the Council's Handbook for Overview and Scrutiny, specifically in relation to: A draft Protocol for the Appointment of Co-opted Members to the Council's Scrutiny Committees.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the draft Protocol be endorsed and is included in the new Handbook.

### **Request to attend Conference**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) for the Committee to consider sending delegates to the LGA Conference entitled "The Future of Scrutiny – Tackling the Big Issues".

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that:-

- i) Members contact Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, if they wish to attend the Conference; and
- ii) the report be received and noted.

### **Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the period of 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> January, 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 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2009 – 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

8. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

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

(Signed) R. HERON,  
Chairman.