

At a meeting of the SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE held in CITY HALL, SUNDERLAND on WEDNESDAY 19th JANUARY, 2022 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor D.E. Snowdon in the Chair

Councillors Doyle, Hartnack, Mann, Mullen, D. Snowdon and Thornton

Also in attendance:-

Mr Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Mr Stephen Laverton, Strategic Manager Community Safety and Safeguarding, Neighbourhoods Directorate

Mr Nic Marko, Local Democracy Reporter

Mrs Christine Tilley, Community Governance Services Team Leader, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and highlighted the importance of everyone present continuing to wear face coverings to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Butler, Heron, Hodson, D. MacKnight, N. MacKnight and P. Smith.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 9th December, 2021

Internal Communications

Councillor Hartnack commented that the point he had raised regarding customer service to the public and staff working from home had still not been recorded correctly and what's more he had not received a response to his enquiry. Councillor Hartnack commented that the point he had raised should be recorded as follows:-

“Whilst it is recognised that as a consequence of Covid, staff should be allowed to work from home where appropriate. Has there been a comprehensive piece of work undertaken, to properly assess if customer needs are being appropriately met by such a policy and that systems are in place to ensure that customer service is not being negatively impacted upon as a result of such a policy?”

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 9th December, 2021 (copy circulated), as amended, be confirmed and signed as a correct record and that a response be provided accordingly, by the appropriate directorate lead to Councillor Hartnack.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

Item 6 – Notice of Key Decisions

Councillor Doyle made an open declaration on item number 210728/613 due to his employer being involved in land acquisition relating to the matter on the notice.

Safer Sunderland Annual Report 2020-2021

The Executive Director of Neighbourhoods submitted a report (copy circulated) sharing progress made by the Safer Sunderland Partnership (SSP) in 2020-21.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Stephen Laverton, Strategic Manager Community Safety and Safeguarding briefed the Committee on the report which provided details of the membership of the Safer Sunderland Board, the strategic priorities and a summary of the work of the SSP during 2020-2021.

Councillor Thornton referred to paragraph 2.7 of the report concerning motorcycle disorder and the work being undertaken to establish a designated piece of land where legal off-road driving could be undertaken. She made the point that there was concern about those people who didn't want to use this and continued to cause disorder and enquired what would be done about this.

Mr Laverton reported that there had been punitive measures and the Police had taken the bikes off those people committing an offence. The model of establishing a designated piece of land where legal off-road driving could be undertaken was based on something being undertaken in Fife which had worked well and included having a vehicle which could pick up the motorbikes and take them to the site. Officials from Fife had come down to Sunderland to meet with Mr Laverton and colleagues and had explained how things were working.

Councillor Mullen asked how the police and the Council shared data on road traffic accidents and referred to an accident on Durham Road where the Police had no record of the accident happening due to the criteria used and judgement made by the Police at the scene of the incident. Councillor Mullen confirmed that he had raised this at a meeting of the West Sunderland Area Committee also and enquired whether there was something that could be done to improve the flow of data between both organisations and make it more uniform.

Mr Laverton stated that he was happy to look into this and raise the matter with the Police.

Councillor Hartnack provided some insight into the system the Police were using in that an accident needed to include some form of injury to be recorded and that serious damage did not get counted into the data. He commented that a better way of counting near misses and damage was needed, a better way of collecting the data for improvement on the city's roads.

In response to Councillor D. Snowdon, Mr Laverton confirmed that there had been a domestic violence fatality on Christmas Day. There were 3 domestic violence

reviews currently being undertaken and this was in addition to those. Following the reviews parties would be looking at whether there were any lessons to be learnt.

Councillor Mann referred to paragraph 2.6 concerning City Centre Youth Violence and enquired what type of offences these were.

In response Mr Laverton advised that the offences related to street fighting, assaults and domestic abuse.

Councillor Mann referred to the section relating to alcohol and the number of alcohol dependent drinkers. She expressed concern as to how the data was collected and enquired whether these people were being helped and who was looking after them.

Mr Laverton advised that the figures had been provided by Public Health colleagues. The Drug and Alcohol Group had not met for a while, however help and support was provided and he would be able to provide an update to the Committee in the November report.

Councillor Mann also praised the SARA Project, commenting that the ward she represented had similar issues to what the project was tackling and enquired if this could be expanded to other areas of the city as soon as possible.

Councillor Hartnack enquired why Gentoo were not on the Membership Board of the Partnership and Mr Laverton advised that Gentoo was one of the key partners but was unsure why they were not a standing member of the partnership and he undertook to make some enquiries about this.

Councillor Hartnack referred to the risk factors for Sunderland and asked how many people were homeless in Sunderland. Mr Laverton said he would check and report back.

Councillor Hartnack referred to the information detailed in the report concerning young people and disorder. He stressed the importance of detached youth work to target those areas where the Police knew there was a problem, as this could have a significant impact on the disorder. He stated that he felt Youth Workers were in a better position to deal with this than the Police to achieve a positive outcome.

Mr Laverton commented that there was a Youth Offending bus which could be moved to where it was needed so that Youth Workers were able to carry out some detached youth work.

Councillor Hartnack highlighted the Residents' Views section and asked if this was an accurate reflection and where this data had been taken from. He also asked if it was possible to expand the reach of the residents' survey to get a more accurate picture as there had only been 678 residents surveyed.

Mr Laverton advised that Safer Communities had commissioned the survey and he would look into Councillor Hartnack's queries.

Councillor Hartnack reported that residents were told to ring the 101 non-emergency number for situations which did not require an immediate police response and he advised that this was providing an appalling service. This was a view which other

Councillors on the Committee supported. Councillor Hartnack asked if the Council had made any representations about the service.

Councillor Hartnack commented that Sunderland did not receive a 'good deal' in terms of policing numbers from Northumbria Police. Sunderland was policed from South Tyneside and there was no longer a Police Station in the city. He referred to the Notice of Motion on Road Safety submitted to Council a couple of meetings ago. He asked for an update on how this was progressing to get a better deal for Sunderland residents as he felt Sunderland was not getting as good a deal as some of the other Local Authority areas covered by Northumbria Police.

Mr Laverton advised that he would take back the above questions to get a formal response from the Police Service.

Councillor Doyle asked for the following information/made the following comments in relation to Appendix 1 of the report:-

- A breakdown of vehicle type involved in the accidents.
- How the data was analysed and the way in which it was fed into the Highways Department, looking at trends to improve provision for the road and public space user.
- It appeared that there was a concentration of the incidents with most being around the city centre and people and pedestrians there were over affected. Was there a correlation with too many cars coming into the city centre?

Councillor Thornton referred to paragraph 2.6 of the report concerning the work being undertaken in relation to City Centre Youth Violence and mentioned that there had been a major incident in Houghton-le-Spring. She commented that further details and information on the lessons learnt would be useful as incidents of youth violence were happening all over the city and not just in the city centre now.

Mr Laverton agreed that incidents were occurring right across the city and advised that work was being focussed on 40 families. He highlighted the Bill currently going through Parliament on the Protect Duty – 'Making the public safer at publicly accessible locations' that would have a significant for the Local Authority.. He commented that the Local Authority would be expected to put in a similar amount of work for any homicide. He advised that Northumbria Police were looking at putting together a pilot with all agencies coming together to look at incidents to see what resources they needed to put in.

In response to Councillor Thornton who enquired what focus work with 40 families looked like and whether it was happening now in Houghton and Hetton and in the Coalfield where a serious incident had taken place, Mr Laverton confirmed that the Police and Crime Unit and Police Crime Commissioner had identified a resource to tap into to do this work.

Councillor Mullen enquired whether some of the Scrutiny budget could be used to commission independent research into building a better data system for Road Traffic Accidents and to ask other Council's what they did and how they used the system.

The Chair commented that she felt that the Committee needed to wait to see what happened with the Notice of Motion previously referred to in the meeting, which had been submitted to Council in September 2021 regarding Road Safety in the City and the improvements around this Members were calling for.

Mr Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer stated that he had contacted the Officers dealing with the Notice of Motion to find out what was happening with it and would forward on any information he received. The Committee could certainly do some independent research if this was wanted following all of this.

Full consideration having been given to the report and the Chair having thanked Mr Laverton for his attendance, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the Safer Sunderland Annual Report 2020-2021 and the information detailed above be received and noted; responses to the Councillors concerned to be provided as soon as possible.

Work Programme 2021/22

The Scrutiny, Mayoral and Member Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching, for Members' information, the thematic Scrutiny Committee work programmes for 2021/22 and providing an opportunity to review the Committee's own work programme for 2021/22.

(For copy report – see original minutes.)

Mr Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer advised that budget referral reports from Cabinet would be added to the work programme and submitted to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee for consideration at its next meeting in February.

Full consideration having been given to the report it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the above information, the Scrutiny Committees' work programmes for 2021/22 and the variations to these work programmes be noted, together with the scrutiny budget position.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny, Mayoral and Member Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated), providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28-day period from 10th January, 2022.

(For copy report – see original minutes.)

Councillor Doyle asked for further information in relation to item 211217/674 Unauthorised Encampment Policy and Mr Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer undertook to look into this and circulate the information.

4. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance and wished them a safe journey home.

(Signed) D. E. SNOWDON,
Chairman.