

COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SAFER SUNDERLAND PARTNERSHIP FORUM - FEEDBACK

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

8 DECEMBER 2009

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focused Services; CIO4: Improving Partnership Working To Deliver 'One City'.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with a feedback on the annual Safer Sunderland Partnership Forum that was held on 23 October 2009 in the Stadium of Light, Sunderland.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 15 June 2009, the Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of anti social behaviour in the city.
- 2.2 In setting the scope of the study, the Committee agreed that it would be useful for members to participate in the Safer Sunderland Partnership Annual Forum. This would provide an opportunity for members to consult with partners and members of the public on the key issues facing the city in terms of tackling anti social behaviour.

3 Current Position

- 3.1 The Safer Sunderland Partnership Annual Forum took place on 23 October 2009 at the Stadium of Light, Sunderland.
- 3.2 The programme for the event comprised presentations by Councillor Tom Foster, Chair of the Safer Sunderland Partnership Board and Chief Superintendent Dave Pryer. There was also a question and answer session involving partner representatives. Central to the event programme was a series of carousel workshops. The workshops looked at the following issues:-
 - Involving communities and improving public confidence;
 - Tackling anti social behaviour and perceptions of anti social behaviour;
 - Reducing alcohol misuse and the harm it causes, including alcohol related crime;
 - Setting priorities for 2010/2011
- 3.3 Councillor Tom Foster, Chair of the Safer Sunderland Partnership Board reported on the key achievements during the current year.

- The year had continued to see a sustained fall in recorded crime and Sunderland continued to be below the national average. This reduction had been seen across all of the major crime categories including violent crime, house burglaries, robbery and criminal damage. It was also pleasing that the gap between crime and perception crime was continuing to close.
 - Anti social behaviour remains a key issue for residents and has been identified as a priority during the year. Sunderland's balanced approach to tackling anti social behaviour (through prevention, early intervention, enforcement and support) has resulted in improved behaviour and attendance in schools and strengthening communities through more effective enforcement.
 - The year has continued to see big reductions in youth offending and Sunderland's YOT continues to be regarded as one of the best in the country.
 - A lot of good work has been done as part of the community payback programme with 33,000 hours of unpaid work.
- 3.4 Chief Superintendent Dave Pryer stressed the importance of the relationship between partners, members and the public.
- 3.5 He noted that there had been a major improvement in crime figures, with a 39% fall in recorded crime in the last 6 years. Crime levels in Sunderland continued to be below the national average. It was particularly pleasing that crime figures had continued to fall despite the onset of the recession.
- 3.6 A major challenge for the year ahead was to continue to build on the recent improvements in feelings of safety. This was being achieved developing the quality of information and feedback provided to local residents – helping to provide residents with a stronger voice and ability to shape the level of service they receive.
- 3.7 For the year ahead there continued to be a number of key areas for development:-
- Focusing on areas with the highest levels of crime
 - Better public engagement
 - Victim support services
 - Continuing to improve feelings of safety
 - Reduce alcohol misuse
 - Tackle violent crime and domestic violence
 - Reoffending
 - Drug misuse

Issues Raised During the Workshop

- 3.8 During the carousels / workshops, attendees identified a number of recurring issues under each strategic priority as set out below:

Reducing re-offending

- Work with offenders in prison before release as well as after release and promote support services available on release (e.g. posters in the courts)
- Multi-faceted approaches required to support offenders as established patterns of offending can't be broken with one single intervention
- Continue community payback work

Tackling violent crime

- More support and encouragement of victims to come forward and expand SDVC court DVD to wider violent crime
- Support to report incidents and through court proceedings
- More Domestic Violence initiatives looking at forced marriages

Reducing drug misuse, the harm it causes and drug related crime and disorder

- Education on drugs delivered to secondary schools
- Good level of drug service provision in the city centre, but need more projects based widely across the city.

Reducing problems in communities with higher than average crime and disorder

- Engage young people with ideas of what they would like to do
- More prevention courses at an early age concentrating on disciplining bad behaviour
- More CSOs and a visible presence as people more are willing to engage with them and report crime

Tackling anti-social behaviour

- Community empowerment is a key factor in tackling ASB
- Identify the alternatives that youths want and involve them in the solution
- Use resources wisely. A common concern from youth providers was that a concentration on the mobile youth villages might mean less resources being available to help sustain the established youth provision in the various localities. Support for 'Bricks and mortar' establishments that cater for substantial numbers of young people on all nights of the week (and not just on Fridays and Saturdays) should not be neglected as they might be a better resource during the dark nights.
- Drinking dens and not enough being done to engage with young people involved in ASB.
- ASB linked to private rented issues and repeated displacement (e.g. using selective licensing, ASBOS and other tools and powers to tackle bad landlords).

Reducing alcohol misuse, the harm it causes and alcohol related crime and disorder

- Target adults buying alcohol for young people and more responsible sale of alcohol via off licences and other outlets is required

- Ensure youth provision is available on weekend nights
- Publicise the effects of alcohol misuse, advertise and educate in similar ways to tobacco.
- Whilst the volume of licences granted cannot be restricted, greater control is desirable
- Consumption of alcohol used to be carried out within a regulated environment in licensed premises – this has now been eroded
- Greater education for both parents and young people is necessary to alert people of the dangers of alcohol
- The partnership should consider better control of the marketing of alcohol and cheap alcohol promotions should not be allowed
- Better access to inpatient detoxification and rehabilitation should be made possible for chaotic individuals that cause a great deal of service usage
- Drunks admitted to hospitals should be handled correctly and where necessary removed by the police
- Magistrates have access to very limited powers when dealing with lower level alcohol related offending

Feelings of safety, involving communities and improving public confidence

- Get the media on board to promote more positive news stories and continue to improve confidence
- More work in the community by Magistrates e.g. regular Court Open Days to show the public what they do
- Bring Police and community meetings to the community where they are at – ask community where they want to see the police.
- More consideration to the physical environment, better lighting, design of buildings/city centre, tackling void properties etc
- Better support for victims, offenders and communities (and make sure people hear about it).
- Tell the public what's been done / achieved and also what support is out there for victims

Priorities

The annual Safer Sunderland Forum asked attendees (partners, elected members and the public) to prioritise their top concerns from the current SSP priorities. The top 3 issues were:

1. Reducing alcohol; and reducing re-offending (joint top)
2. Reducing drug misuse
3. Tackling Anti social behaviour

Of the respondents, 60% were partners and the remaining 40% were a mix of elected members, residents/community crime fighters and community and voluntary sector reps.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That the feedback report from the Forum be noted.

4. Background Papers

None

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