

At a meeting of the COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Heron in the Chair

Councillors Emerson, Maddison and Scaplehorn

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor D. Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Safer City and Culture
Councillor Tate

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Ball, Copeland, Ellis, J. Scott, Timmins and J. Walton.

Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 6th July 2010

In response to Councillor Maddison's query, Claire Harrison, Acting Scrutiny Officer, advised that the Committee had spent £2,991, not including printing costs of the policy review, which would be included and provided at a future meeting.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 6th July, 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

Item 4 – Response from Cabinet – 21 July 2010 – Policy Review – Study into Anti Social Behaviour

Councillor D. Wilson declared a personal and prejudicial interest as Portfolio Holder for Safer City and Culture.

Response from Cabinet – 21 July 2010 – Policy Review – Study into Anti Social Behaviour

The Deputy Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder for Safer City submitted a joint report (copy circulated) to provide feedback from the Cabinet meeting held on 21st July, 2010 which considered the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee's Policy report into Anti Social Behaviour.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor D. Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Safer City and Culture, presented the report and advised that Cabinet had accepted the Committee's recommendations and were now waiting for the results of the Government's Spending Review.

In response to Councillor Maddison's query on the expected report from the Victims Champion, Stuart Douglass, Safer Communities Manager advised that they were trying to get a complete picture of the impact of the service and would be happy to bring a report to a future meeting.

It was also advised that the Victim Support had been funded to employ an additional worker and progress had already been made on some of the recommendations.

In response to Councillor Scaplehorn's query of timescales for training and guidance for Members and Officers on the powers currently available for tackling ASB, Councillor Wilson advised it would be provided as soon as it was achievable.

In relation to the options for improving the enforcement of environmental ASB and combating issues such as graffiti, litter and fly tipping, Councillor Wilson commented that it was about the education of adults as well as children.

Councillor Emerson commented on the need for a programme to educate people on such issues and that it seemed no matter how many waste bins were provided, they were still not used.

Councillor Emerson also commented that the dog waste bins were not emptied quickly enough resulting in strong odours.

Councillor Wilson advised that he would pursue the matter as if people are acting responsibly and disposing of dog waste properly, officers should be working with them.

In relation to the expanding of the Phoenix Project, Councillor Wilson commented that it had been very successful and were waiting for funding, which was also the case with the XL Youth Villages, which could be determined after October.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that there had been an excellent response to the XL Villages in the Washington area and believed there was a real need to push forward with them, irrespective of funding.

Councillor Wilson agreed and commented that he believed if an outlay of a few pounds were to be made, there was the potential to save thousands in the long run.

The Chairman commented that the difficulty the projects faced was that the prevention of crime/ASB could not be collated through statistics to show how successful they were.

In relation to the potential of introducing improved security on buses, Councillor Wilson commented that he used the bus services regularly and felt they were as safe as they could get but the issue was being explored further.

Councillor Wilson also informed the Committee that £40,000 funding had recently been secured to enable the extension of the CCTV monitoring system.

The Chairman commented that the introduction of CCTV had definitely helped the area and thanked Councillor Wilson for his report.

2. RESOLVED that Members note the proposed actions detailed within the Action Plan appended to the report.

Alcohol, Violence and the Night Time Economy Policy Review 2010/11 Scene Setting Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an overview to the Committee on current partnership responses to alcohol related violence in the City Centre, as part of their policy review.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Chief Inspector Sean McKenna, Northumbria Police, informed the Committee that there had been a 38% reduction in serious violence over the last 28 days.

Leanne Davis, Drug and Alcohol Strategy Manager, advised that they had responded to Sunderland being within the top 5% of highest ranked local authorities areas for alcohol specific under 18 year old hospital admissions by employing a young people's worker who was based in the hospital.

Chief Inspector McKenna briefed the Committee on Operations Guardian and Governor which intended to put officers on the ground and provide confidence to the public and also act as a deterrent. Both operations had been very successful thus far.

In response to the chairman's query, Ms. Davis advised that the alcohol treatment centres were spread throughout the City.

Councillor Scaplehorn applauded the introduction of intervention teams in hospitals but felt the problem was that people had to give permission before they could be treated.

Ms. Davis advised that the service follows on after the individual had been discharged and helped through peer support but in terms of alcohol treatment, it was voluntary.

Kelly Henderson, Safer Communities Officer/Violent Crime informed the Committee of the two successful Drink Banning Orders obtained in the City and also informed of the Council's marketing campaign to promote messages of safety.

In response to Councillor Maddison's query, Chief Inspector McKenna advised that statistically the violent age groups were between 18-21.

Councillor Scaplehorn referred to the reviewing of Monday night operations and enquired as to the figures in relation to weekends.

Chief Inspector McKenna advised that Mondays were predominantly student nights and were as busy as a Friday or Saturday night. In terms of particularly bad nights, there weren't any in Sunderland, with generally very low levels of crime, but as Mondays were becoming busier there was a possibility of an increase in issues.

Councillor Scaplehorn enquired as to Police resources due to Monday nights becoming busier and if this was evened out by Sunday nights becoming less so.

Chief Inspector McKenna advised that they did not have the same level of overlap on a Sunday to Monday night but were using funding streams to make sure there was sufficient staff available on Monday nights.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and Members consider which of the current activities being carried out in the City they wish to take evidence as part of the review.

Change in the Order of Business

The Chairman advised that he would be taking Item 8 on the agenda (Poverty of Place Visit) at this juncture to allow Mr. Platt to attend to other duties.

Poverty of Place Visit

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with feedback on the recent visit undertaken by this Committee and Members from the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Emerson referred to the visit to the Swan Street Centre and Southwick Health Forum commenting that the biggest problem was financing and such programmes needed funding streams to be identified.

Councillor Emerson also commented that it was disappointing to see the Peat Carr field not being used by the Community and more for Anti Social Behaviour such as quad biking etc.

Councillor Scaplehorn informed the Committee that efforts had been made to instigate activities on the field yet no-one had turned up.

In response to Councillor Maddison's query, Councillor Scaplehorn advised that the local children were consulted as to what facilities/activities they wanted on the field.

Councillor Scaplehorn also commented that dog fouling was an issue on the field, which tended to come from the local residents pets, who then complained about children causing anti social behaviour elsewhere.

Les Platt, Senior Policy Officer (Diversity) advised that the issues involved with the field were being investigated in trying to encourage a community aspect and engage more with local people.

Mr. Platt also commented that Members and Officers benefited from the visits and was an exercise which could be repeated in the future.

The Chairman commented that a number of Members had suggested other sites and informed of a recent visit to Fence Houses.

Mr. Platt advised that Members had gained an idea of the area just by driving through on the visits.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that the visits were an excellent exercise and the Committee benefited from attending the different areas, giving Members more knowledge and there should be more arranged in the future.

The Chairman commented that the visits had highlighted the need to finance and help the community organisations who could soon be losing funding.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Performance Report 2009/2010

The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with a performance update relating to the period April 2009 to March 2010. The report included key achievements during 2009/10, residents' satisfaction with services and progress in relation to the LAA targets and other national indicators.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Emerson enquired on what was being done in relation to the isolated pockets of areas where the perception of Anti Social Behaviour was high and also

commented that the non attendance of the Police, when people report incidents, deters people from reporting in the future.

Councillor Emerson also commented that the public's reluctance to identify offenders was an issue.

Mr. Douglass advised that the statistics provided from the survey gave a global view of Sunderland in general. This practice had recently been disposed of with more of a connection to local areas preferred. It may be too early to give full accurate statistics on but they could be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

Mr. Douglass also commented that they were working with LMAPS but agree there is much more to be done.

Councillor Scaplehorn commented that when 24/7 Police attended reported incidents, they did not take the names of youths involved before they were dispersed, whereas the Neighbourhood Teams did take details and contacted their parents.

Mr. Douglass commented that he was not in a position to advise and that they may already take such details but he would take the point up with the Police.

Mr. Douglass also advised that the Neighbourhood Teams review all logs of the other patrols for specific areas involved in issues.

5. RESOLVED that the Committee consider the continued good progress made by the Council and the Sunderland Partnership and those areas requiring further development to ensure that performance is actively managed.

Consultation: Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting Police and the People

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with information about the Home Office Consultation: Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting Police and the People.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In relation to paragraph 3.2.4 the Chairman raised concerns that if the Commissioners decided to raise costs, it would have a knock-on effect to the Council's budget.

Councillor Maddison enquired if the Police Commissioner was required to have any qualifications.

Mr. Douglass advised that there were no details as yet and that further details would be included when the bill was released.

The Chairman commented that he was not opposed to the idea of Commissioners but was concerned as to the effect their role would have on Members' democratic

right. The Chairman also enquired if it had been implemented at Northumberland Council.

Mr. Douglass commented that he was unaware of the status at Northumberland Council but advised that Sunderland was working closely with the Local Government Association and Councillor Foster was very involved with the Police Authorities providing the Council with a strong voice.

The Chairman commented on the improvements made in engagement with Police and residents and that it was now about educating people to report incidents.

Councillor Scaplehorn raised concerns in relation to paragraph 3.5.2 and the proposals to encourage more participation from the community in Neighbourhood Watch etc., when we are facing spending cuts and may not be able to support them financially.

Mr. Douglass noted that the issue of Neighbourhood Watch had been raised many times at this Committee and that the Governments 'Big Society' proposal had still not released any details yet as to what their expectations would be. It may work well in Sunderland but would need assistance financially.

Councillor Emerson commented that the Neighbourhood Watch worked well when it had support but raised concerns on the proposals to request people to volunteer to provide frontline services. He felt that the Council would have real trouble in getting people involved for fear of retribution.

6. RESOLVED that the Committee note the report and Members' comments be fed into the consultation process.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1 September 2010 – 31 December 2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1 September 2010 – 31 December 2010 which relate to the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Work Programme 2010-11

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing for Members' information the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2010 11 Council year.

(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.