



South Tyneside Council

Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordinating & Call-in Committee Minutes 17 February 2015

Present: Councillors Dix (Chairman), Bell, Brady, Donaldson, Hughes, Leask, McCabe, McMillan, Meling, Milburn, Sewell, K Stephenson

In attendance: Councillor T Dixon (Lead Member Area Management and Community Safety)
Councillor M Butler (Lead Member Adult Social Care and Support Services)

Vera Baird QC (Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner), Ruth Durham (Director of Policy, Performance and Scrutiny, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria), Chief Inspector Julian Bowran (Northumbria Police), Christine Briggs (Director of Operations, South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group), Aaron Tucker (Commissioning Manager, South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group), Andrew Whittaker (Corporate Lead Area Management), Dave Owen (Area Crime and Justice Coordinator), Paul Baldasera (Statutory Scrutiny Officer), Neil Simpson (Senior Democratic Support Officer)

There were 3 members of the public in attendance.

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2015

Agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2015 be approved.

4. Crime and Disorder: End of Year Performance Review

Submitted: Report of the Corporate Director Business and Resources

The Lead Member Area Management and Community Safety presented this report which provided details of the performance of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Board for the period 1 April to 31 December 2014.

The Committee was reminded of its statutory role as the designated body to scrutinise the work of the Community Safety Partnership and the Lead Member indicated that she would welcome Members' comments and suggestions to provide accountability and ensure that resources were being correctly targeted towards both national priorities and local need.

The Lead Member reported that South Tyneside had seen a reduction of 1% in reported crime during the period covered by the report and during the same period the area had been identified as having the second best performing partnership from its cluster group of fifteen areas.

There had been a number of other positive trends in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour and the Lead Member highlighted each of these in turn.

Members also received information about the following key areas:

- The Partnership's strategic priorities contained in its annual local crime and disorder plan;
 - The introduction by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) of three funding initiatives which South Tyneside had been invited to bid for. These opportunities had been particularly welcomed since, from 1 April 2014, the PCC had indicated that funding for the CSP would be reduced following the cessation of the Home Office grant.
 - The reduction in the number of Northumbria Police Force Area Commands from 6 to 3 and the pairing of South Tyneside with Sunderland Area Command.
 - Key actions for 2015/16;
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- Future scrutiny arrangements.

The Chairman thanked the Lead Member for her very positive report and commended all of the agencies involved in delivering an improved set of crime and disorder performance figures.

A Member highlighted the recent report by the Commons Education Committee which recommended the teaching of sex and relationships education to both primary and secondary school children. Whilst supporting the Committee's findings in principle, the Member recalled that a significant amount of work had already been carried out in relation to child safeguarding. She expressed the hope that this work would not be undermined by any moves to make age-appropriate sex education and relationships teaching a statutory part of the school curriculum.

A Member pointed out that a grant of almost £500,000 had recently been secured which was being successfully used to support two Sexual Health Workers based at the Ocean Road Community Association.

A Member raised the issue of nightclub doormen and suggested that there was potential for more robust controls in terms of the scope of their duties. It was important to ensure that the "duty of care" principle extended further than the premises being supervised and that doormen should be mindful of the welfare of clients and non-clients both inside and outside of a pub or nightclub.

The Police and Crime Commissioner agreed that the responsibilities of people working in the night-time security industry did not simply end at the door of their premises. This was an issue that had already been taken up and incorporated into the training programmes of doormen and nightclub security workers.

Agreed: That (a) the Lead Member Area Management and Community Safety be thanked for her report and (b) that the Police and other agencies involved be commended for their work in reducing the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour in South Tyneside.

5. Visit from Vera Baird QC: Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner commended the Community Safety Partnership for an excellent set of performance figures which had been achieved in an extremely challenging financial environment following the cessation of funding from Central Government.

In practical terms, the CSP's original budget of £2.789 million had recently been incorporated into the central Police budget which had itself been "top-sliced" by £7 million.

Reduced budgets were one of the key challenges for the six Northumbria-based Community Safety Partnerships which were responding by looking at ways to strengthen cross-cutting working on issues that were common to all areas.

The development of new and innovative ways of working was essential in the current economic climate. One example of this was the training of local officers who could act as Chairs in domestic homicide reviews. Previously, it had been necessary to use Chairs from the South of England which had been quite costly in terms of travel, accommodation and other expenses.

Locally trained Chairs would help address this by ensuring that the Northumbria Police regions would be able to provide a Chair for each other's domestic homicide reviews and ensure that associated costs were kept to a minimum.

The Police and Crime Commissioner made reference to the priorities contained within the Police and Crime Plan which, it was noted, exactly followed the Community Safety Partnership's own strategic priorities.

Members' attention was drawn to a short DVD based on Domestic Violence Champions in the workplace, the benefits of such a facility and the training courses available to employees who wished to undertake this role.

The Police and Crime Commissioner explained that, in future, her office would be responsible for commissioning Victim's Services. In practice this would involve the commissioning of emotional and practical support services for victims of crime.

As a first step, the PCC had established "Victims First", a service that would enable all direct and indirect victims of crime, including parents, siblings, children, partners and close friends, to cope and recover from the impact of crime.

The service was based around the following key principles:

- Initial emotional and practical support, including signposting;
 - More detailed and longer term emotional and practical support;
 - Support and referral to existing specialist services that would help a victim to cope and recover;
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- Referral to Victim Services commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Police and Crime Commissioner went on to explain that funding reductions had required the six former Area Commands to be amalgamated into three. Linked to this process had been the disposal of some older and more costly police stations. Whilst this was having some local impact in terms of the perceived Police presence, the closure programme was in fact being used as an opportunity to help bring the Police closer to the public that they served.

Locally, the Jarrow Police Station had been sold. Officers from Harton Police Station would in due course be moved to a new building on Horsley Hill Square which had been formerly used as a Rent Office and was currently undergoing renovation and adaptation work.

In Hebburn, it had been planned to use the Fire Station as a base for the Police but this proposal had met with some local resistance. Currently investigations were taking place into the use of one of the local shops.

A Member suggested that modern policing was more and more driven by technology and, as a result, the traditional Police station was becoming less relevant. It was, however, acknowledged that a physical Police presence was still a source of reassurance for many local residents.

The Member went on to commend the continued high performance of Northumbria Police, particularly in the light of substantial and ongoing reductions in the force's budget.

The Member particularly highlighted the issue of drugs which was a widespread problem causing misery for individuals and local communities alike. Conversely, there were a number of people who were profiting from the illegal selling of drugs, many of whom were making large sums of money from the trade. It was suggested that, in the past, the Police had taken a robust approach to such activities but that, more recently, there appeared to be a significant number of offenders who seemed to be breaking the law without fear of Police action. Whilst acknowledging the importance of the Police's Domestic Violence agenda, the Member indicated that drugs were no less of an issue and he asked that the Police and Crime Commissioner undertake to look at the matter more closely.

The Police and Crime Commissioner acknowledged the Member's concerns but pointed out that drug-related crime had gone down by

almost a quarter in the area and that the Police were continuing to treat this as a priority area.

Chief Inspector Bowran emphasised that drug dealing and misuse was an area where the Police were very pro-active and there was currently a significant amount of work being carried out, much of which could not be reported for operational reasons.

A Member expressed concerns about press reports regarding an increase in Police complaints.

The Police and Crime Commissioner pointed out that Northumbria Police was one of the very best performing Police forces in the country. It was, however, accepted that there was some scope for improving the way that the force dealt with complaints. These had indeed increased in number, although not to the extent indicated in the local press.

In response to this situation, the Police and Crime Commissioner had, since taking up office, introduced a triage system for complaints whereby every complainant was spoken to within 24 hours of making contact. The system took a pro-active approach to dealing with complaints which resulted in speedy resolutions, often within 48 hours. Around 38% of complaints were now being resolved through the use of this mechanism.

A Member asked about plans for the year ahead.

The Police and Crime Commissioner explained that Victims First remained the key priority but working with partners to reduce crime continued to underpin every aspect of Northumbria Police's work.

Much of this work was based on the Police and Crime Plan (PCP) priority areas and focused on issues such as diverting potential offenders from criminal activities, tackling domestic and sexual abuse, child sexual abuse, hate crimes and so-called "honor" crimes. In such cases it was essential for the Police to make it as easy as possible for vulnerable victims to be able to report crime and this was reflected in the fact that "Community Confidence Building" was one of the PCP priority areas.

A Member raised the issue of the 101 non-emergency number which, it was suggested, was often difficult to access. Even on those occasions when a connection was made, the responder did not seem to be familiar with the local area.

The Police and Crime Commissioner expressed surprise that the 101 operator would not have knowledge of the local area since the system was based on satellite mapping which ensured that anyone

operating it should be able to determine the caller's location as well as details of the surrounding area.

In terms of the difficulty in connecting to the 101 service, it was acknowledged that this might happen during periods of heavy demand. The Member's views were sought on a possible change to the current system which would include a facility for a guaranteed call back within one hour. The Commissioner indicated that she would be happy to arrange for the Member to visit the 101 call centre to see at first-hand how the system operated.

The Chairman thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner for her report and her frank responses to Members' questions.

Agreed: That the Police and Crime Commissioner be thanked for her attendance.

6. Presentation: South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group: Commissioning Intentions 2015/16

This presentation, which was delivered by Christine Briggs, Director of Operations and Aaron Tucker, Commissioning Manager from the South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), set out the CCG's commissioning intentions for the period 2015/16.

In delivering the presentation Members' attention was drawn to the following key areas:

- The five-year forward view including the five priorities for operational delivery, primary care co-commissioning and opportunities to develop new models of care;
- Commissioning intentions;
- Finance;
- Local challenges;
- Programmes of work;
- Benchmarking with peers;
- Overarching aims;
- Key schemes for 2015/16.

A Member indicated that, whilst "review of dementia services" was mentioned in the Key Schemes for 2015/16 section of the presentation, there did not appear to be any reference to this in the Local Challenges. The Member was concerned at the omission particularly since dementia was an issue of growing importance.

The Director of Operations explained that Local Challenges had been drawn from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and consequently reflected those issues that had been identified as key local priorities. Members were, however, reminded that this was a

high-level presentation which looked primarily at the strategic commissioning areas. If an issue was not mentioned in the report it did not necessarily mean that it was not included in the more detailed version of the five year forward view.

The Commissioning Manager indicated that, although the local area was currently one of the best in the country in terms of its approach to dementia, there was every intention to push forward and continue to develop dementia services in the future.

The Member acknowledged the commitment but indicated that she would have liked to have seen dementia as a higher and more explicit priority.

A Member pointed out that he had highlighted the issue of GP access on a number of previous occasions and, whilst this was recognised as an issue of major local concern, there had been no mention of this in the presentation.

The Director of Operations explained that the CCG had commissioned HealthWatch to undertake a piece of investigative work around access to GP's surgeries; a report on this issue was expected soon. Practices had themselves been doing some self-awareness work and the intention was to bring together the findings of both of these work streams.

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that the issue of access to GP surgeries was scheduled to be brought to the 14 April meeting of the Committee.

A Member highlighted proposals to change the NHS allocation formula for Clinical Commissioning Groups from the current system which incorporated a deprivation related measure known as the "health inequality weighting", to a new "weighted capitation formula" which would remove the health inequality weighting and place a greater emphasis on age. The Member expressed concern at the negative impact that this might have on areas such as South Tyneside which fared badly in terms of health inequalities compared to many other parts of the country and particularly to groups such as young people who were living with deprivation.

The Director of Operations indicated that the CCG shared the Member's concerns over the changes to the funding allocation formula and acknowledged that the Group needed to commission in a way that met the needs of the local population. The CCG did however need to operate both within the legal framework of its statutory funding provisions and the current climate of reduced Government funding.

A Member returned to the issue of GP access and, whilst acknowledging that there was already an item on this topic on the Committee's Work Programme, suggested that the matter was urgent and really needed to be addressed as soon as possible.

The Director of Operations explained that the joint commissioning changes to be introduced from 1 April 2015 should give the CCG greater influence in relation to GP access and how it was managed. It was however planned to bring a draft action plan to the 14 April meeting of the Committee for Members' consideration and comments.

Agreed: That the South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group's Director of Operations and Commissioning Manager be thanked for their presentation.

7. Work Programme 2014/15

Submitted: Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating and Call In Committee

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer outlined the Committee's agreed Work Programme for the 2014/15 Municipal Year and invited Members to suggest any items they would like to see included in it.

Members were also reminded that, prior to the start of the new Municipal Year, the Statutory Scrutiny Officer would be meeting with the Senior Management teams from each of the Council's three Service Groups to identify key issues for the year ahead.

This information would be brought to the Committee so that Members could decide which of the identified topics merited scrutiny and which of the three Scrutiny Committees would be the most appropriate to carry out this work.

Once confirmed, the various topics would be incorporated into the Scrutiny Committees' individual Work Programmes for 2015/16.

A Member recalled that the Committee had previously discussed the issue of ambulance waiting times and suggested that, in view of the recent media attention on this matter, it might be an opportune time to look at the issue in more detail.

The Statutory Scrutiny officer indicated that this issue was to be discussed very shortly at the Regional Scrutiny level but he would be pleased to ask a North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) representative to come along to a future meeting of the Committee.

Ordinarily the Chairman would attend these Regional meetings but, as he would not be available on this occasion, Councillor Leask indicated that she would be happy to accompany the Statutory Scrutiny Officer and feed back her observations to the Committee.

Agreed: (a) That the Work Programme be approved as presented and, (b) that the following item be added to the Work Programme for a future meeting of the Committee:

- North East Ambulance Service: Current and future challenges for the service.

8. Chairman's Urgent Items

There were no Chairman's urgent items.
