

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting16th April 2009

1. Title of Item/Report

Scrutiny Review of Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Watch, and CCTV

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to the final report of the Housing & Community Safety Select Committee detailing its findings arising from its review of Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Watch and the Council's CCTV network. The review examined how each of these functions contribute towards community safety in the Borough, and also took into account the issue of fear of crime, in the context of an overall reduction in the Borough's crime levels. The review presented an opportunity to review the early operation of Neighbourhood Policing in Stockton Borough, examine the contribution made by Neighbourhood Watch, and undertake an assessment of the effectiveness and sustainability of the Borough's CCTV network. It was also clear that although the levels of crime in the Borough had been falling, the fear of crime amongst residents remained, and in some case was increasing, and so an investigation into this aspect of community safety comprised the fourth main element of the Committee's work.

In order to inform the review, the Committee had undertaken wide ranging consultation and Members of Council, the Borough's Neighbourhood Watch membership, parish and town councils, resident groups, Area Partnerships, and local residents were invited to submit comments to the review. The Committee received a good response to its consultation and a range of views had been put forward. The results of the 2008 MORI survey were also considered and, in addition, two focus groups were held in order to assess resident opinion in relation to the fear of crime.

The Committee were of the view that Neighbourhood Policing had had an overall positive effect. Local teams were embedded in the community and relationships with local organisations had been established in a number of cases. PCSOs were seen to be making a valuable contribution towards community safety in the Borough. However, the Committee found that in some aspects there was room for

improvement and it would welcome steps to increase community involvement and awareness, especially with regard to the contact number for local teams.

In addition, the Committee found that for residents there remained some confusion regarding the various community safety teams that existed in Stockton and how and when to contact them, especially, but not exclusively, with regard to the Police non-emergency numbers, and the Council's Neighbourhood Enforcement Service. Nationally there had been a halt to the introduction of a national non-emergency number (101), and the Committee recognised that it would be impractical to create such a number on a local basis. However, the Committee believed that there was an opportunity for an investigation to take place as to whether it would be feasible to undertake joint training between

Cleveland Police and the Council in order to improve the capacity of call handlers so that resident concerns were recorded and passed on as a matter of course, or that calls could be transferred to the appropriate service where this was possible (recognising the competing demands on call handlers, especially those at Police Headquarters). At present, many residents appeared to be contacting, or were told that they were contacting, the 'wrong' organisation, and the onus was passed back to the original caller to contact the correct organisation.

Cabinet was therefore invited to approve, in principle, subject to a full assessment of both service and medium term financial planning implications recommendations for both this Council and endorse recommendations for submission to external organisations.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve, in principle, subject to a full assessment of both service and medium term financial planning implications the following recommendations for this Council and endorse those recommendations for submission to external organisations:-

R1. that the Head of Community Protection be authorised to work in conjunction with Cleveland Police to investigate the potential for joint work to take place in order to ensure that when non-emergency calls are received by either Cleveland Police (eg. 302930/326326) or the Council's Community Protection services (eg. Neighbourhood Enforcement Service 528439), if necessary, the calls, or the details of the issue, are transferred to the correct service for action, thereby improving customer service;

R2. that the Committee support the plans of Cleveland Police to undertake further promotional work regarding neighbourhood policing teams, and request that this includes promotion of the 302930 neighbourhood police team

number;

R3. that Democratic Services amend the Member induction programme/packs so that it includes:

- a) information on the Borough's Neighbourhood Watch schemes;
- b) details of the relevant Ward's Neighbourhood Policing Team;
- c) and that this information is kept up to date;
- d) and that this information is also provided to all current Members as soon as available;

R4. that the Committee recognises the work undertaken by Neighbourhood Watch, and in order to further improve this work, Stockton Council and Cleveland Police should work with, and encourage Neighbourhood Watch in Stockton Borough to:

- a) amend the Ringmaster System so that it sends out crime prevention advice and also 'positive' information in relation to local crime trends, and thereby contribute to reducing the fear of crime;
- b) amend the membership forms for the Ringmaster system, so that extra detail can be included, and it is clear as to which scheme the applicant wishes to be a member of;
- c) explore and promote better usage of technology to deliver Ringmaster messages (eg. text messaging/email), and in relation to the use of email messages, lower case text is used in order to ensure ease of reading;
- d) work with the Council and Cleveland Police to undertake a promotional campaign highlighting the benefits of setting up Watch schemes;
- e) support the production of local scheme newsletters by centrally producing templates and sample articles (including crime figures), and investigate the use of volunteers to undertake this work;
- f) seek additional sponsors in order to support its work.

R5. that Stockton Council should ensure that the policy of not allowing footage captured by its CCTV network to be sold to media companies is

clearly stated in the public domain;

R6. that a comprehensive plan be developed for financial support to the Council's CCTV network, in conjunction with relevant partners, as part of a wider appraisal of the financial sustainability of the Security Centre;

R7. that planning applications for new developments will be assessed for their suitability to contribute towards the funding of additional crime prevention infrastructure (including CCTV), the levels of provision and/or contributions sought being dependent on the size and type of proposed development, in line with the adopted Supplementary Planning Document 6: Planning Obligations;

R8. that in order to contribute to reducing the fear of crime amongst residents:

a) the Council and Cleveland Police should continue to publicise positive news in relation to the reduction of crime in the Borough, but that this should not preclude the provision of common sense crime prevention advice;

b) the Council explore the scope for further inter-generational working between young people and older residents of the Borough.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The topic was identified at a meeting of the Scrutiny Liaison Forum in March 2008, and subsequently incorporated into the scrutiny work programme by the Executive Scrutiny Committee in April 2008. The Council and Cleveland Police work closely together to deliver Neighbourhood Policing, and Neighbourhood Watch has a role to play in terms of reducing crime and the fear of crime. The review was also considered timely due to the need to ensure the continued effectiveness and sustainability of the Council's CCTV network, and it was clear that the fear of crime amongst residents remained relatively high despite a reduction in the overall levels of crime.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By midnight on Friday, 24th April 2009

Proper Officer
20 April 2009