

Overview Report

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

Overview Meeting 2020

5 March 2020

Community Services

Context

Members are well aware that as a Council we have had to adapt to funding reductions of £68 million over the last seven years and future funding is uncertain.

The challenge for all Members is to ensure that decisions about the basis on which services will be delivered are within the resources available, taking account of a number of factors such as the uncertain financial position, changing demographics, increasing demand, new national legislation and policy direction. Members are reminded of the four policy principles that support our decision-making:

- **Protect the vulnerable by**
 - protecting people who are subject to or at risk of harm
 - helping people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
 - supporting people who are financially excluded
 - assisting people whose circumstances make them vulnerable

- **Create economic prosperity by**
 - ensuring the businesses and people of Stockton-on-Tees are part of a thriving and productive Tees Valley economy

- **Tackle inequality through improving**
 - health
 - job opportunities, skills and training
 - educational attainment for all
 - affordable housing and fuel poverty
 - financial inclusion

- **Help people to be healthier by**
 - providing mainstream services that are available where needed
 - providing preventative services that are available where needed

It is within this context that the Select Committee is invited to undertake their overview duties.

Performance Reporting

Performance across the Council Plan was reported on a six-monthly basis. This was reported to Executive Scrutiny Committee in July and November 2019, and then forwarded to members of each Select Committee with key issues highlighted by the Chair at their next meeting.

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Community Services – Director - Jamie McCann

Relevant services include:

- Community Safety

Council Plan 2019-2022

The Council Plan sets out the aims and objectives for all services and is refreshed on an annual basis.

The 2019-22 objectives for the Community Safety theme are attached at Appendix 1.

Key Issues

Service delivery is influenced by a range of internal and external factors that develop over time. Key challenges and emerging opportunities are summarised as follows:

- **Crime and ASB:** Between April 2017 and March 2019, **Publicly reported crime** has increased by 20.8%, equating to 3,079 more victims of crime or 256 extra crimes a month. **Total crime**, which includes other offences such as drugs, possession of weapons and public disorder, rose by **317 crimes a month, giving a total increase of 23.4% (+3,798 crimes).**

The increase in crime is predominately dominated by the theft category (+ 493 crimes and 42.6% of all publicly reported crime), however the largest increase against the previous year can be seen in the areas around violence against the person (+2,565 crimes and 38.9% of all publicly reported crime), in particular this relates to stalking and harassment crimes (+1,847 crimes and 15.1% of all publicly reported crimes). Stockton is **performing above average** in all crime areas, with the exception of violence with injury, **when compared to our most similar group average.**

To gain a national comparison on how Stockton is performing against other partnerships, data has been obtained from IQuanta. IQuanta is a web-based system that presents statistical information about police and partnership performance across a wide number of measures. The data is very detailed and allows partnerships and police to be ranked and compared in league tables regarding crime types. These league tables are called the 'Most Similar Group' (MSG), compiled using various data such as population figures and deprivation levels with 1st position being the best performing. The most up to date data relates to the end of December 2019 and shows that **Stockton is performing above average** within its most similar group and ranked 8th out of 15, with one being the best performing.

In terms of Anti-Social Behaviour, In terms of **anti-social behaviour, levels have reduced** (- 16% police incidents/-7% SBC incidents) for the reporting period and Stockton still retains the lowest ASB rates per 1000 population in Cleveland and following Darlington in the Tees Valley area. Cleveland Fire Brigade data shows that Stockton has the lowest rate per 1000 population for arson/deliberate fires.

- **Hate Crime:** Through the Safer Stockton Partnership there remains a commitment to raise awareness of Hate Crime and the impact it has on communities. Work continues to increase the reporting of hate crime as well as support individuals and organisations to identify hate related incidents. There is now a Tees Strategic Hate Crime Group which

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aims to develop and agree consistent approaches hate crime reporting and awareness raising across the four local authority areas. At a local Level the Stockton Hate Crime Group continues to review activity at a local level as well as improve engagement with community and minority groups across the borough. Recent work of the local group has included leading on a review of 3rd party reporting centres and the overall hate crime reporting 'journey', with a view to ensuring it remains easy to access and navigate.

- **Domestic Abuse:** Tackling Domestic Abuse continues to be a key priority. During July 2016 to June 2017 there were 6,956 domestic related crimes in Cleveland which is a rise of 1,301 crimes – UP 23% on the previous year. In England and Wales, offences rose by 18.4% placing Cleveland above the national average. The number of domestic related crimes in Cleveland accounted for 13.1% of total crime. This is higher than the national rate of 11%. The revised Domestic Abuse Strategy and Action Plan was launched in April 2017. This outlines the key areas of work for the next three years aimed at reducing the prevalence of Domestic Abuse across Stockton, with a particular focus on reducing the repeat victimisation rate as well as increasing the reporting of issues at the earliest opportunity.. To support the progression of this strategy a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator has recently been appointed.
- **Prevent:** The roll out of Prevent awareness raising training has continued throughout the Council and to key partners in education and community based services. In addition to this a programme of engagement continues within schools and additional briefings have been carried out at Riverside College and Durham University. Following the high profile terror attacks last year and the increase in vehicle based attacks, a number of safety measures have been implemented including the purchase of vehicle mitigation equipment to provide added security at major public events. Stockton continues to be represented at a Tees level on both the Gold Contest Strategic group as well as the Prevent Silver Group. There is also an established Prevent Operational group in place for officers within SBC to discuss emerging issues. We continue to promote the online resource page on the SBC website as well as the Channel referral process which is used to support individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism. On a national level the Home Office is in the process of consulting on a revised approach to managing Channel cases at a local and regional level. 'Operation Dovetail' seeks to transfer additional responsibilities and resources to local authorities to manage the safeguarding risk and improving the multi-agency response to dealing with vulnerable people.
- **Asylum and Migration:** Stockton continues to act as a dispersal area for asylum seekers and in 2019 the former COMPAS contract managed by G4S was replaced by the ASST contract which was won by Mears Housing Group in the North East and Humber. Whilst the number of asylum seekers in Stockton on Tees has fallen over the past 12 months, significant concerns remain regarding the delivery of this contract by Mears, in the region overall. These concerns are based around the lack of information sharing and data which would allow the Council to protect communities and properly plan for service delivery. This matter is therefore under constant review and continues to be a priority for the next period.
- **Public space Protection Order (PSPO)** Consideration for a Public Space Protection Order to be implemented in town centre areas to tackle aggressive begging.

Operational Response

The majority of front line service delivery is now undertaken by Care for your Area Services and in particular staff deployed in both Civic Enforcement, Security and Surveillance.

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- **Civic Enforcement Service:** A full review and re-profile of this service area was completed in 2018 and since then, work has continued to ensure the service meets the needs of the public, businesses and Members.

The changes, which came into effect in 2018 has seen the area re-profiled to better tackle the issues that are important to the public and Members, which are separated into parking, environmental crime and anti-social behaviour. Whilst the overall number of staff in the service has reduced due to budgetary reductions, the total number of staff on the ground has increased through prioritisation of front line services. A total of 24 Civic Enforcement Officers, supported by a further 3 Case Management Officers now make up the profile of the service split between 2 Senior Officers, 18 Civic Enforcement Officers and a further 4 deployed to the Town Centre Operations Team in support of the Stockton Business Improvement District (BID). One particular success of this review is the introduction of the case management team which take on the more complex and longer term cases which in turn gives vulnerable customers consistency as well as allowing Civic Enforcement Officers to spend more time in the communities in which they serve. This team has recently been bolstered by a further post to allow for more concentrated work to be carried out in the targeted action areas of Parkfield & Oxbridge and Mandale & Victoria.

The operating hours of the service have been reduced from 24 hour cover to a more focused window of operations to maximise the number of staff available during the core times of demand from the public and partners between 0700hours and 2200hours.

- **Security and Surveillance Service:** This section largely operates in the shadows of the main front line services, but none the less performs a critical role on behalf of the Council. At present, we don't overtly promote our surveillance services for a number of reasons linked to public perception of surveillance and the need to keep sensitive operational data restricted to avoid gaps in coverage being exploited. Furthermore despite being involved in some excellent work, reporting on this is controlled in law due to the ongoing nature of investigations conducted by the regulatory authorities.

Whilst primarily charged with conducting surveillance operations using over 280 public space CCTV cameras in Stockton on Tees, the team are also responsible for all security requirements, monitoring intruder and fire alarms as well as responding to such activations. The control room is also called on to act as the main communications centre for the Council out of office hours for services such as social care (Emergency Duty Team), Environmental Health, Registration and Bereavement as well as taking emergency calls for Care for your Area and tradesmen.

The control room deal with over 20,000 telephone calls per year and handle on average 5,000 live incidents on behalf of strategic partners such as Cleveland Police. In 2019, the control room were implicate in over 500 arrests made by the Police for offences ranging from murder and rape through to wanted persons, shoplifting, violent assaults, car crime and drug dealing. Aside from this, operators have assisted in a number of nationally significant operations in relation to organised crime as well as assisting internal department in executing the Councils statutory duties.

The technology and infrastructure within the building has been updated in the last twelve months, which includes a significant investment in CCTV cameras across the borough, including a largescale replacement of cameras in Stockton High Street. Furthermore, works are ongoing within the Security Centre at present to not only improve the working conditions for staff working in the building, but also to refit the control room which will ensure that the layout and functionality is fit for purpose for years to come.

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Aside from the public realm duties undertaken by this service, it should be noted that in order to fund operations, the team also undertake a large proportion of work for the private sector on a contractual basis. This includes alarm monitoring, lone worker tracking and CCTV monitoring for locations such as industrial sites, industrial estates and academies around the United Kingdom.

Potential Areas for In-Depth Review

Members are reminded that topics are being sought for the Scrutiny Work Programme 2020-21. Using the information provided as part of the performance updates and this Overview meeting, the Committee is invited to identify potential topics for review within this theme.

Potential topics will be considered at Executive Scrutiny Committee on 24 March.

- A review of the powers and duties of both Civic Enforcement Officers and Police Community Support Officers in order to explore overlaps and potential efficiencies in joint working.
- An in-depth review of obstructive parking in Stockton on Tees to better understand the powers available for enforcement.
- An in-depth review of information sharing between Stockton Borough Council and key partners including the Police to ensure continued collaborative working.

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Appendix 1 **Council Plan 2019-22 – Community Safety**

Our vision is to make the borough a place where levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime are low and people feel safe and secure.

Key relevant objectives:

- Deliver effective community safety services