

## Crime and Disorder Select Committee

A meeting of Crime and Disorder Select Committee was held on Thursday, 11th February, 2021.

**Present:** Cllr Pauline Beall (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley.

**Officers:** Jamie McCann, Marc Stephenson, Anthony Wilton (CS); Rachel Maddison (Xentrall); Margaret Waggott, Leanne Maloney-Kelly, Peter Bell, Gary Woods (MD).

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Steve Nelson (Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety).

**Apologies:** None.

### **CD 36/20**      **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

### **CD 37/20**      **Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations**

The Committee considered a further update on last month's (January 2021) progress report for the previously completed School Parking review. This followed a request from Members that subtitles be added to the proposed school parking video and that a communications plan regarding the roll-out of the video be presented to the Committee as soon as possible.

It was noted that an amended version of the proposed school parking video, with subtitles included, had been circulated to Members for comment earlier in the week (to avoid any technical issues from attempting to share this via Microsoft Teams during the meeting). No further changes had since been proposed.

Regarding the communications plan, the Principal Engineer from the SBC Community Services and Transport directorate was in attendance to present a draft document which identified three main objectives:

- 1) Encourage parents and carers to park responsibly when dropping children at school.
- 2) Provide schools with resources in order to help promote the message (i.e. video and Junior Road Safety Officer information).
- 3) Encourage parents to use sustainable travel modes to get their children to school.

The proposed communications methods and target audience for each objective were outlined (as referenced in a subsequent table).

Members were supportive of the changes made to the school parking video and endorsed the contents of the communications plan. In relation to the roll-out of the video, the Committee re-iterated the importance of timing this right for maximum impact. Though schools were currently shut for most children due to the latest COVID-19 lockdown, scheduling the roll-out around any anticipated return, the summer term, and, crucially, ahead of the new school year in September 2021 should be considered. Clarity around when the agreed video

could start to be shared would be confirmed by Officers as soon as possible following this meeting.

AGREED that:

- 1) the information be noted and the Action Plan following the School Parking review be signed-off as fully achieved.
- 2) Officers confirm when the agreed school parking video can be shared more widely.

**CD  
38/20**

## **Overview Reports 2021**

As part of the annual opportunity to hold Cabinet Members and Services to account, as well as understand the challenges and issues arising ahead of the next year's work programme, the Committee was presented with overview reports from both the Administration, Democratic and Electoral Services and the Community Services and Transport directorates.

### Administration, Democratic and Electoral Services

For the purposes of this Committee, the Council's Licensing Team Leader presented a Licensing-focused overview report covering the following:

#### Emerging Issues

- Adapted and responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, including legislative changes, COVID-compliance patrols, and a new pavement licensing regime. Have successfully continued to process 1,500 applications, have kept the Borough's transport trade (750 drivers, 620 vehicles and 25 operators) licensed, safe and updated on changing guidance (even holding trade meetings via Microsoft Teams), and have kept the local hospitality trade (575 premises) licensed and informed about constant changes to guidance.
- Increased pace with digital agenda, including implementation of smarter ways of remote working / communication, online training for staff and improved intelligence pipeline.
- Both the Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Licensing Policy and Sex Establishment Licensing Policy are due for review in 2021.
- Service continues to meet statutory obligations and timescales, and works closely with the trade and responsible authorities. The service also sits on and contributes to the Alcohol Related Harm Reduction Steering Group.
- In 2020, the service brought its first prosecution under the Animal Welfare Act against an unlicensed dog home boarder. A defendant pleaded guilty and was fined at court.
- The service joined the other Tees Valley licensing services in the first joint operation against unlicensed scrap metal collection which resulted in enforcement action.

#### Priorities for the year ahead

- Continue to provide COVID-19 business restrictions advice – where breaches are reported or found, it will continue to investigate, and if needed enforce, under COVID legal provisions.

- Consider COVID-sustainability and continue to support the licensed trade with ever-changing legislation and guidance.
- Continue to compare best practice with Licensing counterparts.
- Adopt all the Department for Transport's published 'Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards' (to be effective as of the 1st April 2021).
- Continue to undertake proactive engagement campaigns to promote public safety across all areas of licensing (e.g. National Licensing Week, Responsible Gambling Week, and an annual safety campaign around explosives (fireworks)).

#### Challenges and opportunities

- The pandemic has seen a rise in puppy sales and the service is increasing investigations into unlicensed dog breeding. Engaging, educating and encouraging these businesses to become licensed will be the initial approach, but an increase in enforcement work and potential prosecutions against unlicensed activity is anticipated in 2021.
- A similar approach will be taken in relation to a likely increase in businesses taking advantage of new legislation allowing removable furniture on the highway.
- Will continue efforts to disrupt unlicensed scrap metal collection.

The Committee was reminded that the Licensing Team consists of only nine staff who manage over 2,000 live licences and cover a range of issues involving over 40 pieces of legislation. Members were assured that the service will be ready for the exit from the latest COVID-19 lockdown, whichever direction that takes. It was also noted that the suggested potential area for in-depth review – Animal Activities Licensing – will not now be put forward for inclusion on next year's work programme as these processes are being reviewed by the service (since it involves relatively new legislation).

The Committee commended the work of the service during 2020-2021 and asked for thanks to be passed onto staff in recognition of the very challenging year they had experienced. Members felt that the service was a highly-organised department within the Council, and that a large proportion of the public may not understand its activity – as such, it would be worth publicising its work more widely (e.g. Stockton News) which may also aid in encouraging and reinforcing the reporting of concerns / issues for follow-up.

Also in attendance was the Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety who echoed praise for the excellent work of the service and reiterated the new responsibilities and ways of working that staff had taken on. Continuing to strengthen the service's online offer and positive feedback from the taxi trade was also noted, as was the latest Private Hire and Hackney Carriage policy review, an area in which the Council was in a much better place than a number of other Local Authorities in the region.

#### Community Services and Transport

The Council's Community Protection and Resilience Service Manager presented a Community Services-focused overview report. Noting that service delivery is influenced by a range of internal and external factors that develop over time, and that, like all other areas of the Council, the last year had been particularly challenging due to COVID-19, continued work towards meeting

Council priorities was outlined as follows:

#### Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

- Reduction in both publicly-reported crime (11.6%) and total crime (which includes Police-generated crimes) (5.7%) between April and December 2020.
- The positive outcome rate for total crime is 13.1% year-to-date, a 1.9% increase against the previous year. Stockton-on-Tees has the lowest crime rate in the Tees Valley (per 1,000 population) at 58.2 crimes.
- Regarding national comparators, the Borough has a crime rate slightly higher than average within its most similar group (MSG) and is ranked 11th out of 15 (with 1st being the best performing) – despite better performance, this is lower than last year as others have improved more. Compared to the other Tees Valley areas, Stockton-on-Tees is performing the best and better than the Tees Valley average (even when stripping-out COVID-19 anti-social behaviour (ASB) -related incidents).
- 2,295 ASB service requests recorded by the Civic Enforcement Team (including noise and alcohol issues), a decrease of 117 incidents (4.9%). Incidences of begging and rowdy / nuisance behaviour also significantly down compared to the same period last year.

#### Hate Crime

- Continued commitment to raise awareness / impact of hate crime through the Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP). Work continues to increase the reporting of this crime.
- The Council is an important part of the established Tees Strategic Hate Crime Group which aims to develop and agree consistent approaches to hate crime reporting and awareness-raising across Cleveland.
- At a local level, the Stockton Hate Crime Group continues to review activity as well as improve engagement with community and minority groups across the Borough.
- Roll-out of Prevent awareness-raising training has continued throughout the Council and to key partners in education and community-based services despite COVID-19. Programme of engagement continues within schools with additional briefings undertaken at local colleges / universities.
- Taking on the responsibility for chairing the Prevent Silver Group in 2021.
- Following refreshed guidance to the Channel process (part of Prevent) in late-2020, it will be a priority this year to ensure appropriate changes are made in Stockton-on-Tees.

#### Asylum and Migration

- The Borough continues to act as a dispersal area for asylum seekers, and in 2019, G4S was replaced by Mears Housing Group as the accommodation and support provider in the North East and Humber.
- Local asylum seeker numbers have reduced over the last year but challenges remain regarding the delivery of the Mears contract, largely around COVID-19 and the commissioning of suitable properties.
- This issue is under constant review and continues to be a priority area.

#### Civic Enforcement Service (operational response)

- Work has continued to ensure the service carries on meeting the needs of the public, businesses, and Members.
- During the pandemic, the service has supported food distribution to the most vulnerable in the Borough's communities, as well as supporting both

testing and vaccination delivery alongside business-as-usual demand.

- Overall level of requests has remained in line with expectations.

Between April and December 2020, the service responded to over 6,500 calls with the majority relating to environmental crime (namely fly-tipping and other waste-related offences).

- A team of 10 COVID Marshals joined Civic Enforcement in December 2020 and are now deployed throughout the Borough in High Streets, Town Centres and local areas to help stop the spread of the virus. They work closely with colleagues in Public Health and the Police to ensure a multi-agency tiered response to matters relating to COVID-19 enforcement and regulation.

Security and Surveillance Service (operational response)

- 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, and Registration and Bereavement, as well as taking emergency out-of-hours calls for Care for your Area and tradesmen.

- 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 (aided over 600 arrests in 2020).

- Technology and infrastructure within the building has been updated in the last twelve months. Improvement works planned for the Security Centre have been fully completed.

- In order to fund operations, the team also undertake a large proportion of work for the private sector on a contractual basis.

A potential topic for inclusion on next year's work programme was highlighted around the consideration of requirements of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in Stockton-on-Tees. This had been touched upon in previous areas of scrutiny work and is something which may need to be looked at in more detail.

Members were pleased to see the very encouraging overall reduction in local crime incidents and commended the work of the various services outlined who operate at the 'coal-face' of local life.

It was queried whether any reasons were known for the increase in stalking and harassment incidents. This had been raised with the Police at the last SSP meeting and was likely due to a change in the reporting process, with reports via other digital means (online / social media abuse is now classified as stalking and harassment rather than ASB) now being added to the figures (note: the 20.1% rise in stalking and harassment cases was based on 2,034 cases in 2019-2020 and 2,442 in 2020-2021, a rise of 408 (confirmed after the meeting)).

The Committee Chair thanked the Community Protection and Resilience Service Manager personally for his significant efforts in a number of COVID-related activities he had been, and continues to be, involved in across the Council. The service areas highlighted at this meeting link into a number of partnerships the Local Authority prides itself on, and credit is due for keeping these going in the current climate, as well as maintaining contact / visibility with

the public and adapting to new ways of working. It was also pleasing to see the Hate Crime agenda moving forward.

The Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety extended his thanks to all staff within the services outlined and felt that these were departments that were very much appreciated by all Elected Members. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, a silver-lining was the way in which partnership-working had been enhanced over the last year. In relation to crime data, it was noted that there is no national definition of violent crime, but that Cleveland Police does have its own robust definition in place. As for any perceived improvement / decline in performance regarding crime, much is dependent upon how Forces record incidents, and any attempt to compare against others is not always done (or is achievable) on a like-for-like basis. Finally, the positive local data around ASB reduction is testament to the excellent Security Centre and associated services.

AGREED that the information be noted.

**CD 39/20 Task and Finish Review - Police Ward Member Communications in Stockton-on-Tees**

Following agreement by the Council's Executive Scrutiny Committee to add a review of Police / Ward Member Communications in Stockton-on-Tees to the Crime and Disorder Select Committee's work programme, the Committee was asked to establish a Task and Finish Group from their membership to commence this piece of work (the topic suggestion proforma was included with the meeting papers to provide further context / background).

Complementing an ongoing Cleveland-wide review of the Police Communications Strategy (which is being undertaken by a Task and Finish Group from the Cleveland Police and Crime Panel), it was felt that a Stockton-on-Tees-focused review would be beneficial in order to examine information-sharing and communications within the Borough between Neighbourhood Police, local Ward Councillors, local residents and key stakeholders. It was also noted that a memorandum with the Force was developed a number of years ago and needed to be reviewed.

The following Members agreed to form the Task and Finish Group:

- Cllr Paul Weston (nominated as Chair of the Group)
- Cllr Kevin Faulks
- Cllr Clare Gamble
- Cllr Barbara Inman
- Cllr Andrew Sherris
- Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley

Following this meeting, contact would be made with the Group in order to begin the process of drafting a scope and plan for this work which would be brought before the full Committee for approval.

AGREED that Cllrs Weston (Chair), Faulks, Gamble, Inman, Sherris and Mrs

Walmsley form the Task and Finish Group for the review of Police / Ward Member Communications in Stockton-on-Tees, and that a draft scope and plan is brought to a future Committee meeting for approval.

**CD  
40/20**      **Work Programme 2020-2021**

Consideration was given to the Crime and Disorder Select Committee Work Programme for 2020-2021. The next Committee meeting was scheduled for the 18th February 2021 (2.00pm) and would include the second evidence-gathering session for the Fraud Awareness (Personal) review, as well as consideration of the draft Action Plan for the recently completed review of Fly-Grazed Horses.

AGREED that the Crime and Disorder Select Committee Work Programme for 2020-2021 be noted.

**CD  
41/20**      **Chair's Update**

The Chair had no further updates.