

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

A meeting of Crime and Disorder Select Committee was held on Thursday, 9th September, 2021.

Present: Cllr Pauline Beall (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Steve Matthews and Cllr Alan Watson.

Officers: Stephen Donaghy, Calum Titley (A&H); Andrea Murphy, Mandie Rowlands, David Willingham (CS); Marc Stephenson (CS&T); Julie Lathan (FD&BS); Jonathan Nertney (HRL&C); Gary Woods (MD).

Also in attendance: None.

Apologies: Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Stephen Richardson and Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley.

CD 15/21 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CD 16/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CD 17/21 Minutes - 22 July 2021

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Crime and Disorder Select Committee meeting which was held on the 22nd July 2021 for approval and signature.

AGREED that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on the 22nd July 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CD 18/21 Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations

Consideration was given to the assessments of progress on the implementation of the recommendations from the Protection of Vulnerable Older Residents Living at Home review. This was the first progress update following the Committee's agreement of the Action Plan in October 2020 (consideration and approval of which was delayed due to the emergence of COVID-19) and, whilst some actions had been hampered by the ongoing challenges posed by the pandemic, key developments were noted as follows:

- Recommendation 1 (The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Cleveland Police provide assurance around the measures put in place to address the failings highlighted in the Force's recent HMICFRS PEEL assessment around identifying vulnerable victims and providing adequate safeguarding): Although an update had not been provided for inclusion with the published meeting papers, the OPCC had since informed the review's Link Officer that progress of the recommendations contained within the PEEL inspection continue to be monitored through regular updates in the OPCC scrutiny programme. In related matters, the current Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS) contract comes to an end on the 31st March 2022, and the OPCC is in the process of developing a specification for the future service model which will commence on the 1st April 2022. The assessment of

progress has therefore been graded '2 (On-Track)'.

- Recommendation 2 (Thirteen extend its older people support service to tenants in the Borough's dispersed bungalows on a needs basis (in line with neighbouring Local Authorities): Thirteen had determined that it was not viable to extend this offer given the existing service already available to all vulnerable and / or older persons in the Borough via the One Call service.
- Recommendation 8 (OPCC and Cleveland Police consider and strengthen their partnership working with Age UK Teesside): Although an update had not been provided for inclusion with the published meeting papers, the OPCC had since informed the review's Link Officer that VCAS work closely with Age UK as / when required, and that the OPCC had recently engaged with Age UK to host a focus group as part of the Police and Crime Plan consultation. The assessment of progress has therefore been graded '1 (Fully Achieved)'.
- Recommendation 9 (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council consider ways in which its current community transport can be used to facilitate access for older people to community-based activities / groups): Following a full exploration of options against available capacity, the service had commenced providing transport to all Council community-based activities in support of, and alongside, Adult Social Care. Examples included transport provision to youth clubs, community centres and other community-based services delivered from Stockton Business Centre. Further work was ongoing with Adult Social Care to look at supporting additional community-based activities in the future.
- Recommendation 10 (Catalyst undertake an audit of VCSE organisations to establish transport capacity which may support greater accessibility for older people): Catalyst published the VCSE directory online in March 2021. This includes organisations in the VCSE sector in Stockton-on-Tees offering transport services for older people – currently, one organisation is listed as providing these services. Further work is ongoing on a near-continuous basis to explore further access to transport for residents, including older people living at home.
- Recommendation 12 (There is a continued push for greater buy-in of E-CINS to foster a joined-up approach across all organisations in identifying and sharing details of those older people who they consider to be 'vulnerable'): Further to a Cleveland-wide review of E-CINS, it was widely accepted that it had limitations which reduced its effectiveness as a data-sharing tool – as such, alternative options were currently being considered, and the development of future tools was being monitored closely by the Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP). Despite this, information-sharing protocols amongst key partners had been developed further following the review and were sufficient to now allow information in respect of vulnerability to be shared amongst relevant partners, with a clear process in place for new partners joining. A commitment had been made by all partners to continue to share information in a timely manner, and daily meetings with key partners were taking place to supplement the wider structure of meetings. Whilst a single shared-information system was not currently available, intra-partnership information-sharing had seen further improvements over the past 12 months, supported by developments in technological aids such as Microsoft Teams which allowed for quick and efficient meetings.

With regards recommendation 2, the Committee expressed disappointment with the response of Thirteen Housing Group and felt it was not acceptable for them to decide that this service was not required, particularly since One Call was not intended as a replacement for Thirteen's own provision. Members emphasised the duty of care that Thirteen had to its residents and proposed to follow this specific issue up with the Leader of the Council.

During consideration of recommendation 12, a query was raised around the effectiveness of information-sharing in vulnerable missing person cases. Officers gave assurance that missing alerts would go 'live' to relevant parties very quickly, and that the Council had direct communication mechanisms in place with Cleveland Police, along with an extensive CCTV capability. It was reiterated that live information-sharing is excellent across the Borough.

The Committee Chair thanked the review's Link Officer for providing the update on progress and suggested that, in light of the somewhat brief responses from both the OPCC and Thirteen Housing Group, a future progress update be provided in November 2021.

AGREED that:

- 1) the Progress Update be noted and the assessments for progress be confirmed (recommendation 2 aside);
- 2) on behalf of the Committee, the Chair would liaise with the Leader of the Council regarding the situation involving recommendation 2 (Thirteen extend its older people support service to tenants in the Borough's dispersed bungalows on a needs basis (in line with neighbouring Local Authorities)).

**CD
19/21**

Scrutiny Review of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)

The second evidence-gathering session for the Committee's review of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) took place at this meeting where Members received contributions from several Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) departments regarding anti-social behaviour (ASB) which impacts upon their service area.

Adult Safeguarding

The SBC Adult Safeguarding Lead Officer presented a report to the Committee, highlights of which included:

- Instances when Local Authorities (Adult Services) have a duty to make enquiries under s42 of the Care Act 2014, including when an adult has needs for care and support.
- Overview of the legal framework, the different types of abuse / neglect, and the key principles which include working in partnership (link provided to the Inter-Agency Safeguarding Policy developed by the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB)). Under the 'psychological abuse' category, intimidation,

coercion, harassment and verbal abuse can all present themselves as ASB.

- Along with the Local Authorities, Cleveland Police are a statutory member of the TSAB and the Adult Safeguarding Team work very closely with the Force on a case-by-case basis. Specific issues, including ASB, are regularly discussed between Council departments and with external partners, and are escalated where necessary to enable organisations to come together to consider actions / options (e.g. Team Around the Individual (TATI) panel, the terms of reference for which were included with the meeting papers). It was noted that, during the COVID-19 period, information-sharing with Cleveland Police had strengthened.
- The main challenges around addressing ASB were due to a lack of reporting by the individual to the Police / Community Safety team or the individual not giving a statement at a later date. Without formal reporting, little can be done from an enforcement perspective.
- Findings of a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) held in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (shared with the Committee) referenced street begging and how warning notices were implemented far too late. The focus of the learning determined that if a co-ordinated professional response had used preventative tools (which a PSPO could be regarded as) earlier on, this might have positively impacted on the individual's behaviour and restricted their drinking habits.

Preventions – Help and Support

The Prevention & Joint Patrols Manager from SBC Children's Services presented a report to the Committee and outlined the following key aspects:

- The directorate has a strong multi-agency Outreach team (with funding contributions from the Police and Crime Commissioner) where information is shared with the voluntary youth sector (e.g. Corner House, which then distributes details to a wider network) and also received. Local youth organisation partners have been re-opening over the past eight weeks, and the team are promoting and diverting young people to local youth provision that is still available.
- Missing-from-home return interviews are carried out by Preventions and Patrols staff, and a member of the Preventions and Outreach team are present at all ASB interviews with colleagues in Community Safety, enabling staff to assess need and offer the support required at the earliest opportunity for any young person highlighted as being involved in ASB. The Outreach Co-ordinator is present at all key meetings (e.g. JAGS, VEMT and Hate Crime meetings) to share information that is relevant, along with directing Outreach staff to areas of concern to support the Borough's most vulnerable young people.
- Young people are transient, and how the Council responds to those involved in ASB needs to be flexible, with the capacity to change as and when needed. Allocating outreach capacity to one specific area would remove capacity for preventative interactions with young people and would reduce the ability to respond in the wider community.

- PSPOs require resources like dispersal orders used by the Police – they need a substantial amount of resource to enforce in order to have the impact required. Lack of resources to enforce could lead to the perception that they carry less meaning or deterrent to those involved in ASB.

Mindful of the impact of COVID-19 and the temporary closure of schools (potentially leading to some young people becoming disenfranchised from learning), the Committee queried if the service had increased its contact with the education sector. Officers confirmed that, along with a Preventions staff member being situated in the Admissions team, the Council provides a single point of contact for all schools within the Borough which enables information on what goes on outside schools to be relayed. It was also important to acknowledge that not all children playing truant were involved in ASB.

The review's Link Officer (SBC Community Protection & Resilience Service Manager) noted that any potential Stockton-on-Tees PSPO would be aimed at those aged 18 or over. That said, it was important to recognise that young people can and do get involved in ASB, and that there were measures in place to address this.

Environmental Health

Focusing on issues around dog control, the SBC Environmental Health Service Manager gave a presentation to the Committee, the key elements of which included:

- Dog control in Stockton-on-Tees, and associated issues concerning irresponsible dog owner behaviour, was currently addressed via the Animal Welfare collection service for stray dogs, use of The Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 provisions, proactive Animal Welfare patrols, stencilling and signage in problematic areas, and through SBC media channels.
- There are no dog control orders in place across Stockton-on-Tees, and only voluntary schemes exist within the Borough's parks and green spaces. The three key locations where wider dog nuisance is caused by irresponsible dog owners have been identified as Ropner Park, Preston Park, and the Crematorium / Cemeteries.
- A PSPO for dog control functions could involve a limit on the number of dogs an individual can walk / exercise at any one time, set areas where dogs must be on a lead (and / or enabling Officers to ask for dogs to be placed on a lead with immediate effect), and / or establishing dog-free zones / areas. The key difference between the existing voluntary schemes and a designated PSPO is that the latter allows for fines to be issued and gives clear instructions to the public as to when dogs must be kept under control.
- Several considerations for a dog control PSPO were proposed; an Order would need to be based on existing local knowledge for areas of concern (Environmental Health Officers already work in conjunction with the Community Safety team), and funding / resources would need to be identified to address operational costs (including enforcement). The Council would need to be mindful of the public response to any proposed controls, and a PSPO would supersede any existing legal powers in the designated area (i.e. dog fouling

enforcement would need to be addressed via the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, not The Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996).

The Committee was keen on establishing the prevalence of dog-related issues across the Borough, and heard that, whilst there were not significant problems occurring in parks, the Council does receive complaints regarding out-of-control dogs. It was also important to note that, although there were few concerns relating to dog control within Town Centres, the planned changes for Stockton high street could see a significant increase in owners using the proposed new green spaces to walk their dogs – care would be needed to ensure this was facilitated in a safe and responsible manner, and did not impinge on the activities of others in close proximity.

Members queried if there were any dog-free zones / areas currently within the Borough. Officers confirmed that, although some signs exist that indicate 'no dogs allowed', this is only a voluntary arrangement and cannot be enforced. Voluntary schemes set a principle which the majority follow; however, some do not, and the Council currently has no enforcement power to take action against such individuals (whether they be residents of, or are visitors to, the Borough).

Clarity was sought around current dog-related Council legal powers. In response, Officers stated that laws exist on picking-up after dogs, and that individuals can be fined for failing to address dog fouling.

Homelessness and Housing Solutions

The Committee was presented with a report by the Manager of the SBC Homelessness and Housing Solutions Team which detailed the following:

- The Team's main focus is around the prevention of homelessness, with staff working with a household / individual 56 days prior to homelessness to achieve a positive outcome. A number of toolkits are used to do this including funds, support and negotiation with landlords, and the initial aim is to keep the household where they are (if safe to do so). If re-housing is the only option, this is done via Tees Valley HomeFinder, funds, advice on private rent and local housing allowance rates, and floating support to help the individual / family sustain their tenancy.
- In terms of commissioned supported housing, the Council is in the process of moving to new Short-Term Housing-Related Support Contracts – these will provide both accommodation for homeless households and support services to ensure residents attend appointments with providers such as drug services or probation, and ensure they gain the necessary skills to live independently. Single households (100 identified) will receive seven hours of support per week, and families (20 identified) will receive five hours per week – commissioned providers include Bridge House, Newalk, Turnaround Homes, Community Campus, and Sanctuary.

When a household needs emergency or supported accommodation, the Team consider all support and risk factors prior to placement, then moves the household on in a relevant and timely manner so as not to create long-term cohorts of complex households in particular areas. Most of the single person accommodation is in the Town Centre area – this is due to provider / landlord

property being manageable from a financial business perspective and property type (note: the recent Supported Housing Tender for homeless households brought no new providers to the area).

- There are a number of providers in the Borough that offer accommodation on a licence for those who are experiencing homelessness or potential homelessness. In such instances, accommodation is not directly commissioned by SBC and, as such, the Council does not make any payments other than eligible housing benefit costs (nor does it have any control over who goes into these units). The Team tries to work in partnership with providers in order to discourage any referrals from out-of-the-Borough being placed due to the often-complex needs of the customer and subsequent potential additional resource on other support services.

- Regarding rough sleeping, there are relatively low numbers in the Borough (last official count in November 2020 recorded eight, the same as in 2019). Many rough sleepers are working with the service on a crisis basis and few, if any, participate in begging (most of the individuals who are active beggars have accommodation).

The Council has a team that works proactively to get rough sleepers in off the street and to stop anyone spending a first night out by working with accommodation providers to prevent eviction (one of the main reasons people sleep rough in the first place). The team are aware of all the Borough's rough sleepers, though some do not want to take-up the offer of help (i.e. sleeping rough is a lifestyle-choice). In addition to the 'standard' homelessness prevention toolkit, staff also have the ability to provide personalisation funds (to address individual needs) and a range of accommodation options including four rough sleeper flats (with residents receiving 10 hours support per week), and 12 move-on properties (and a further six properties with North Star) to enable move-on from hostel-based accommodation. Work is further undertaken on a multi-agency basis including a Rough Sleeper Action Group, partnership-work with housing providers and other support agencies (e.g. Moses Project), and via active participation with the TATI group (led by SBC Adult Safeguarding).

In addition to the above, and in preparation for this evidence-gathering session, the Committee was informed that the following comments were also received from the Council's Private Sector Housing team:

'Some of the ASB experienced can be linked to privately rented housing. Despite the common belief that landlords are liable / responsible for such behaviour, this isn't necessarily the case (although we would expect responsible landlords to deal with such issues).

Ultimately, the responsibility to deal with ASB lies with the Civic Enforcement team, although we sometimes end up being the first people contacted or brought in to an individual case, usually because of our willingness to help and because we are 'associated' with private landlords via the Landlord Accreditation Scheme and P LuSS, both of which under the terms of reference expect landlords to deal with ASB when it is brought to their attention.'

The Committee thanked all the Council's representatives for their contributions which had provided valuable information for the review.

AGREED that the information be noted.

**CD
20/21** **Work Programme 2021-2022**

Consideration was given to the Crime and Disorder Select Committee Work Programme for 2021-2022. The next full Committee meeting was scheduled for the 7th October 2021 and would focus on further evidence-gathering for the PSPOs review with contributions planned from Cleveland Police and Cleveland Fire Brigade.

Prior to the October 2021 meeting, two Task and Finish Group meetings (23rd September 2021 and 30th September 2021) would be taking place in relation to the Police Communications in Stockton-on-Tees review. Members were reminded that the deadline for the Ward Councillor survey (issued to all Elected Members across the Borough during August 2021) was tomorrow (10th September 2021).

AGREED that the Crime and Disorder Select Committee Work Programme for 2021-2022 be noted.

**CD
21/21** **Chair's Update**

The Chair had no further updates.