

Crime and Disorder Select Committee
Overview Meeting 2022
27 January 2022
Community Services and Transport

Context

Members are reminded of the Council's Vision that supports decision-making:

A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm

- This means the Borough will be a place where:
 - People live in cohesive and safe communities
 - People are supported and protected from harm
 - People live healthy lives

A place that is clean, vibrant and attractive

- This means we will enjoy:
 - Great places to live and visit
 - Clean and green spaces
 - Rich cultural experiences

A place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed

- This means that the Borough will have:
 - A growing economy
 - Improved education and skills development
 - Job creation and increased employment

The Council plays its part in making sure this is achieved by being a Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve.

- This means that we will make sure that we provide:
 - Financial sustainability and value for money
 - Dedicated and resourceful employees
 - Strong leadership and governance

Performance Reporting

Performance across the Council Plan was reported on a six-monthly basis to Executive Scrutiny Committee. Please see the link:

<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=SCR>

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND TRANSPORT

Director – Jamie McCann

Relevant services include:

- Community Services

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2024

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

The key 2021-2022 priorities for Community Services and Transport are attached at Appendix 1.

EMERGING ISSUES

Service delivery is influenced by a range of internal and external factors that develop over time. Like all other areas of the Council, the last year has been particularly challenging for this area, but also despite this we have been able to continue the work toward council priorities. Emerging challenges and opportunities are summarised as follows in further detail:

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Whilst the past decade has seen a reduction in crime, ASB and the fear of crime it is still the case that anyone can be a victim of crime and ASB and that the impact on victims can be both significant and long lasting. Knowing this motivates us to continue in our collective efforts to make Stockton-on-Tees a safer borough for all those who live, work, play and visit it. When we look at the social and economic costs of crime in Stockton, crime costs the economy approximately £75m a year (Source).

Between December 2020 and November 2021, there was a total of 19,868 crimes reported in Stockton on Tees. This is 965 crimes more than the same period last year, which is a 5.1% increase. During this period, crimes such as violence against the person (particularly violence with injury and stalking/harassment), public disorder, sexual offences and shoplifting all seen increases compared to the year prior.

Despite an increase in reported crime, this is in line with the current crime picture nationally and also within the Tees Valley where reported crime has increased in all local authority areas with Stockton on Tees experiencing the lowest increase to date. Furthermore, there was reduction in crime types such as theft, burglary (residential and theft from a person), drug related offences, possession of weapons and robbery.

To gain a national comparison on how Stockton is performing against other partnerships, data has been obtained from the Home Office. i-Quanta 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 with other similar areas of the country. 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 September 2021 and shows that Stockton has a crime rate slightly higher than average (0.8 crimes per 1,000) within its most similar group and ranked 10th out of 15, with one being the best performing. When

comparing crime in Stockton on Tees against the other Tees Valley areas, Stockton on Tees has the lowest crime rate in the Cleveland Police force area and is statistically the safest area.

Anti-social behaviour in Stockton on Tees continues to be a key focus for the council, especially given the poor perceptions some residents have when it comes to feelings of safety whilst in our communities. Between December 2020 and November 2021, a total of 6,718 ASB incidents were reported to Cleveland Police which is a reduction of 34.3% compared to the previous period. During the same time frame however, reports to the councils Civic Enforcement Service increased by 1,019 incidents to a total of 4,176. This is an increase of 32.28% however the majority related to complaints about aggressive begging in town centre areas post lockdown measures.

Hate Crime

We have a continued commitment to raise awareness of hate crime in Stockton on Tees 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. Efforts to tackle hate crime is co-ordinated via the strategic hate crime group which aims to develop and agree consistent approaches hate crime reporting and awareness raising across the four local authority areas in Cleveland. Stockton on Tees Borough Council are an active part of this group, having reviewed and refreshed the Hate Crime Reporting Strategy for the Tees Valley recently. At a more local Level the Stockton on Tees hate crime group continues to review incidents of reported hate crime as well as working hard to improve engagement with hard-to-reach communities 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 for all, regardless of the circumstances.

Regarding hate crime, compared with December 2019 – November 2020, between December 2020 and November 21 overall total hate crime increased by 16.2% or 50 incidents. Across the same period, the largest percentage improvement (-66.7%) in hate crime in Stockton-on-Tees was in relation to miscellaneous crimes against society.

Prevent

Prevent is a key part of the wider government CONTEST strategy. The aim of CONTEST is to reduce the risk to the United Kingdom from terrorism. The Prevent process is a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to vulnerable individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism. The 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. In addition to this, a programme of engagement continues within schools and additional briefings have been carried out at Riverside College and Durham University.

Stockton on Tees continues to be represented at a regional level on both the Gold Contest Strategic Group and the Prevent Silver Group, which Stockton on Tees Borough Council are responsible for chairing and leading its continued develop. There is also a new Prevent Operational Group in place for officers within the council to help co-ordinate the partnership response to emerging issues. We continue to promote the online resource page on the council 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. Following refreshed guidance to the Prevent (and subsequent Channel panel) it has been a priority this year to ensure our local

approach follows the best possible practice. An assurance assessment was undertaken in 2021 which found our approach compliant in all aspects of the duty.

Operational Response

Much of our community safety operational response is delivered by two key areas.

Civic Enforcement Service and Covid Support Team

A full review and re-profile of this service area was completed in 2018 and since then, work has continued to ensure the service continues to meet the needs of the public, businesses, and Members. The past 12 months have placed unprecedented demands on the delivery of our frontline services in a safe and reliable way. Following the removal of the national lockdown in 2021, it became clear that demand was far outstripping the resources available to effectively support the reopening of our local economy. Additional funding was made available by the council which has allowed for an additional 12 Civic Enforcement Officers to join the team and greatly improve the level of service we can provide to our communities. We now have a total of 32 Civic Enforcement Officers, supported by a small team of Case Management Officers, in place to deliver out on the council's commitments on community safety.

This team has remained active throughout the Covid pandemic and has been instrumental in supporting council objectives in response to the virus such as supporting the most vulnerable in our communities as well as supporting both testing and vaccination delivery alongside business-as-usual demand. The response to the outbreak of Covid-19 has only been possible with the introduction of further support into the area in the form of the Covid Support Team. This has included a team of Covid Support Officers who have delivered the PPE supply hub, Covid Community Testing Program and supported local businesses on regulation compliance. They work closely with colleagues in Public Health and other partners to ensure a multi-agency tiered response to matters relating to Covid-19 enforcement and regulation.

Whilst Covid-19 has had some impact on the type of service demand on our Civic Enforcement Service this year, the overall level of requests has remained high. Between January and December 2021, the service responded to over 10,000 calls from the public with the majority relating to anti-social behaviour and environmental crime, namely fly tipping.

Security and Surveillance Service

This section largely operates in the shadows of the main frontline services, but none the less performs a critical role on behalf of the wider community safety agenda. Most of this work undertaken on CCTV is subject to reporting controls due to the ongoing nature of investigations conducted by the regulatory authorities which means much of the great work done by the team is not reported on.

Whilst primarily charged with conducting surveillance operations using over 340 public space CCTV cameras in Stockton on Tees, the team are also responsible for all security requirements of the council, monitoring intruder and fire alarms as well as responding to 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 other services.

Between January and December 2021, the control room deal with over 8000 live incidents on behalf of strategic partners such as Cleveland Police and have been credited in supporting close to 1000 arrests. Aside from this, operators have assisted in several nationally significant operations with regards to organised crime as well as assisting internal department in executing the council's statutory duties daily.

The technology and infrastructure within the building has been further updated in the last twelve months thanks in part to funding via the Safer Street Fund, which includes a significant investment in CCTV cameras and transmission equipment.

Aside from the public realm duties undertaken by this service, the team also undertake a large proportion of work for the private sector on a contractual basis to fund the wider service provision. This includes alarm monitoring, lone worker tracking and CCTV monitoring for locations such as industrial sites, industrial estates, and academies around the country.

PRIORITIES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Despite an uncertain picture nationally due to the continued challenges the pandemic poses, we have a clear and decisive strategy to drive forward to make Stockton on Tees a safe and welcoming place to live and do business. A new community safety strategy will shortly be in place which identifies six key challenging areas of focus for the collective community safety partnership, which include:

- Managing the impact of serious and organised crime on Stockton on Tees
- Reducing serious violence
- A focus on vulnerability and those criminally exploited
- Crime and disorder linked to drugs and alcohol
- Reducing the offending rate of the most prolific offenders
- Reducing anti-social behaviour and improving feelings of safety

Alongside these priorities which Stockton on Tees Borough Council are committed to supporting, we also have several direct challenges on the horizon which we have an opportunity to prioritise and meet head on.

The first of these priorities is to support in earnest the development of our town centres once the program commences in early 2022. To do this, we will **maximize the effectiveness of the additional investment made in our community safety related services to protect residents, businesses and the investment in our town centres.**

Secondly deliberate fire setting harms out communities and puts additional strain on our fire and rescue services having accounted for more than 85% of calls in recent years. Stockton on Tees has historically had some of the highest deliberate fire setting rates in the area which has been estimated to cost the wider local economy up to £18 million each year. In 2020 we took a commitment to be a key partner to reduce this epidemic **and in turn support the arson reduction strategy in partnership with Cleveland Fire Brigade.** This work will continue in earnest this year as we look to build on the successes of 2021 and reduce deliberate fire setting further in Stockton on Tees.

Thirdly Violent crime is 70% of the of the total cost of crime in Stockton-on-Tees and has risen by 6% over the previous 12 months. Cleveland has the third highest violent crime rate in the country, and most serious violence offences are increasing at a higher rate than the national average. In 2022 the government are expected to place additional duties on councils to lead on new local strategies to tackle serious violence in their area through the

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Court Bill. To remain ahead of these duties, we will **consider and develop a new serious violence strategy in partnership with other responsible authorities**. We will take a “public health” approach to managing serious violence, focusing on addressing the underlying risk factors which make people vulnerable to violent crime, whilst directing enforcement activity to the locations and individuals most responsible for driving violence in the borough.

Finally we will **give due consideration to the new Protect Duty placed on local authorities as part of the wider national counter-terrorism strategy**. Local councils already support the governments CONTEST strategy through the local delivery of the Prevent program which aims to support vulnerable people being drawn into terrorism through radicalisation. In 2022 the government are expected to announce additional duties which will be placed on local councils to support and deliver new duties which are designed to drive forward an improved culture of security for all businesses, large organisations and public authorities who own and/or operate open spaces and publicly accessible locations.

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR IN-DEPTH REVIEW

Members are reminded that topics are being sought for the Scrutiny Work Programme 2022-2023. 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.

Proposed topic suggestion to be considered at Executive Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2022.

- There are currently several scrutiny topics either due for review, currently underway or due to commence in 2022 for consideration by the Crime and Disorder Select Committee. As such, no new suggestion topics have currently been proposed for consideration.

APPENDIX 1: COUNCIL PLAN – KEY PRIORITIES 2021-2022 (COMMUNITY SERVICES AND TRANSPORT)

Making the Borough a place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm means creating a place where:

- People live in cohesive and safe communities
- People are supported and protected from harm
- People live healthy lives

We have identified these key priorities for 2021-22 to help us achieve this vision. This year we will:

- Develop more services to help people to remain safely and independently in their homes for as long as possible and to make sure that they are not lonely.
- Consult on, develop and deliver a new community safety plan in consultation with key partners, reflecting the community safety priorities of residents.
- In partnership with Cleveland Fire Brigade, support the Arson Reduction Strategy, aimed at further reducing deliberate fire setting within our communities.
- Explore the options around the introduction of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) in Stockton on Tees.