

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

A meeting of Crime and Disorder Select Committee was held on Thursday, 31st March, 2022.

Present: Cllr Pauline Beall (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Steve Matthews, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Alan Watson

Officers: Stephanie Landles (A&H); Louise Crisp (CS); Marc Stephenson, Jamie Stephenson (CS&T); Rachel Harrison, Gary Woods (MD)

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: None

CD 58/21 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CD 59/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

CD 60/21 Minutes

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Crime and Disorder Select Committee meeting which was held on the 3rd March 2022 for approval and signature.

With reference to the 'Monitoring the Impact of Previously Agreed Recommendations' (Councillor Call for Action (CCfA): Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School) item, it was noted that an article had been included in the latest edition of Stockton News regarding the success of the 'little people bollards' – officers were thanked for the prompt implementation of this agreed Committee request.

AGREED that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on the 3rd March 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CD 61/21 Action Plan for Agreed Recommendations - Review of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)

Following consideration and acceptance of the Committee's final report by Cabinet in February 2022, Members were presented with the draft Action Plan setting out how the agreed recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) would be implemented, and target dates for completion. The following aspects of the draft Action Plan were subsequently highlighted / discussed:

- Recommendation 2 (Consideration be given to an increased dedicated and visible multi-agency presence (including the use of recently enhanced SBC Civic Enforcement resources) within the Borough's town centres to support local businesses and reassure residents / visitors in identifying and responding to ASB): In response to a query on how the proposed action would be progressed

in light of the involvement of both the Council's Enforcement Team and Cleveland Police, the Committee heard that each organisation had its own command and control structures but that this was about establishing a co-located model involving the identification of around 10-12 priorities. Members were assured that partnership-working was ongoing and escalation routes were available if required, and it was also noted that health and housing agencies also had a role to play in responding to individuals involved in anti-social behaviour (ASB).

- Recommendation 6 (SBC adopts a formal definition of 'aggressive begging' as follows...) (definition included within the recommendation): Members were informed that, when it comes to the collection of information in relation to begging, a shared model between the Council and relevant partners was currently in place. SBC often addresses such cases in the first instance, with the police usually getting involved once it moves into the realm of ASB. The envisaged co-located model (referenced previously) was expected to aid in the identification and management of cases of aggressive begging.

With reference to the proposal that each of the recommendations should be the responsibility of the newly-created SBC Assistant Director – Community Safety and Regulated Services post, the Committee was reminded that the Council's senior management restructure was yet to be concluded. As such, Members asked that, until that role is appointed to, the current SBC Community Protection & Resilience Service Manager (the Link Officer for this review) should retain oversight of the progress of these actions.

AGREED that:

- 1) the Action Plan regarding the recently completed Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) review be approved.
- 2) the initial progress update on the agreed actions is presented to the Committee in October 2022.

**CD
62/21**

Scrutiny Review of Bonfires on Public Land

The first evidence-gathering session for the Committee's review of Bonfires on Public Land was held, comprising a Local Authority focus involving contributions from representatives of SBC Community Services and Transport, Environmental Health, and Children's Services. With reference to a joint report, the following key elements were highlighted:

- Introduction: This session would outline the seasonal demand on relevant frontline services during the end of October and beginning of November leading up to bonfire night each year. Historically, the Council had previously experienced increases in seasonal crime and disorder, mainly amongst young people within the Borough's communities and town centre areas.
- Overview: For several years now, from the third week in October until after Bonfire Night on the 5th November, a sharp increase in anti-social behaviour (ASB), criminal damage and disorder had been perpetuated by a

number of, principally, youths across the Borough. A key feature of this period is 'Mischief Night' (which falls on the day prior to Halloween – 30th October), an American concept which sees mainly young people engaging in tricks and low-level ASB, something that the Council and its various partners are trying to discourage / eradicate due to the significant issues it causes for the public and local services.

Multi-agency partners, brought together under the umbrella of the Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP), jointly work together in a combined approach under the banner of the Bonfire Strategy, also known as 'Operation Trojan'. This joint strategy is centred on a programme of targeted interventions in the lead-up to this period, with a focus on education and diversionary activities aimed at problem areas across Stockton-on-Tees.

- **Planning Considerations:** In planning for the period, the statistics from the last bonfire season are considered alongside intelligence relating to current hotspots in the community for all partners. This data will be used to target resources during the period alongside reports from Elected Members, residents and businesses. SBC / Cleveland Fire Brigade figures from the previous three years (broken down into various formats including the top five Ward areas) was provided – these incorporated both ASB and deliberate fire-setting cases, as calls often relate to the behaviours around the bonfires rather than the bonfire itself.

Whilst 'Operation Trojan' is the local Stockton-on-Tees response to this period of demand, Cleveland Police have an additional force-wide strategy under 'Operation Autumnus' which also contributes to reducing incidents of crime, ASB and fire-setting.

Input from SBC Youth Services included partnership-work within Youth Unite Stockton which looks at increasing diversionary provision from young people such as Youth Club and activity buses (though the latter has now been sold, other diversionary measures are available). The Council's Outreach Team has continual presence in the community and information-sharing and partnership-working directs appropriate responses toward an identified need or concern.

On occasions, a small number of young people are identified by schools, community safety or police, and are then referred in for help and support as part of a more tailored educational intervention to meet their needs (with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding). Where SBC is unable to meet the need, or identify that more specialist support is required, the Council can link-in with Cleveland Fire Brigade.

- **Our Response:** Following the school summer holidays, the planning stage commences with partners which includes engagement with schools and educational establishments within key areas. This work, undertaken by School Liaison Officers from both Cleveland Police, Cleveland Fire Brigade and SBC, has ensured that key messages surrounding the effects of ASB, deliberate fire-setting and criminal damage are discussed, including the consequences of such acts.

Further education work is led by the SBC Civic Enforcement Service which aims to reduce the availability of combustible materials used in deliberate fire-setting

in the community. This approach, supported by both Cleveland Fire Brigade and Thirteen Housing Group, uses the latest fire-setting intelligence to target key areas where arson and deliberate fire-setting is a concern, and looks to ensure that residents and businesses are aware of the correct channels to dispose of waste (working with the SBC Care For Your Area service), whilst also making clear the potential consequences of failing in an individual's duty of care (including tenancy enforcement action if appropriate).

The final element of this seasonal strategy surrounds the deployment of resources for the purpose of deterring, detecting and dealing with ASB, crime and disorder during this period. SBC Care For Your Area provides two loaders and two drivers, and work up to 22:00 hours (17:00 hours on the 5th November) for partners to report waste that can be used as missiles, and / or combustible materials used in fire-setting, for immediate collection. To enhance the co-ordination of resources across the Borough, joint briefings and agenda items on Joint Action Group (JAG) meetings allow for specific information-sharing, further supplemented by initiatives such as a shared operation command room to ensure better joint-working.

Cleveland Police utilise a range of powers and tools if required, including dispersal orders on hot-spot locations. Cleveland Fire Brigade, meanwhile, contribute to the wider seasonal approach by focusing resources on ensuring that deliberate fire-setting, and the factors which contribute to this such as poor waste presentation and dumped vehicles, are reported following a special reporting arrangement. Alongside this contribution to the overall intelligence picture, Cleveland Fire Brigade have dedicated resources deployed to areas that have already been identified as having the potential to suffer from increased crime and disorder – this includes patrols by both fire crews and proactive intervention via dedicated community liaison officers.

- Impact to Services (and damages and costs): A number of SBC services were affected during this seasonal period, including:
 - Horticultural Services: Following this period, the service repairs damages which have occurred on public land. The vast majority is replaced with edgings / cuttings which are collected throughout the year and therefore recycled into further use. The staffing element of the process is picked up in the day-to-day management.
 - Care For Your Area: Additional costs relate to the additional officers who work up until 10.00pm for the two-week period of the operation. In terms of tonnage, there is no notable increase of waste due to the other methods of disposal which is seen around this time of year.
 - Civic Enforcement Service: Additional costs relate to the additional resources required to staff two main evenings, 'Mischief Night' (30th October) and Bonfire Night (5th November).
 - Environmental Health: This service has the powers to deal with fires and smoke in a statutory nuisance capacity. Data shows that complaints for open burning drop within the month of November compared to October.

Reflecting on the data provided within the submission, the Committee heard that

the number of incidents reported to the SBC Civic Enforcement Service (Appendix 1) was likely an under-representation of the actual number of bonfire cases across the Borough – this was because incidents are not always reported and such behaviour is, to some degree, tolerated around this particular time of the year. Collecting information from multiple voices (including Elected Members) allows SBC and its partners to get a truer representation of this activity.

It was acknowledged that the Environmental Health data (Appendix 3 and 4) provided within the report was more premise-based than public land (the focus of this review). However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the statistics may also be pertinent when considering the materials used on bonfires and the levels of reporting – namely, that people had been unable to dispose of their rubbish in the usual manner for a period of time when access to waste / recycling facilities was closed / restricted, and that people were at home more (e.g. lockdowns, changes to working practices, furlough) to witness incidents.

Following-up on this theme, Members queried if the existing restrictions around tips were discouraging residents from disposing of their waste, and asked if the current appointment system was likely to be lifted. Officers stated that the civil amenities site was currently managed by Suez, and their position was to maintain the booking system (which had been streamlined since its initial implementation) as queueing time and traffic around the site had decreased (though total use had not). The situation could, however, be kept under review, and was, perhaps, something which Members may want to review in the future in terms of the whole approach to waste management.

AGREED that the information be noted.

**CD
63/21**

Work Programmes 2021-2022 & 2022-2023

Consideration was given to the Crime and Disorder Select Committee Work Programme for 2021-2022, as well as the initial schedule for the imminent municipal year, 2022-2023.

The next Committee meeting was arranged for the 28th April 2022, with Members due to consider evidence from Cleveland Fire Brigade and Cleveland Police as part of the ongoing Bonfires on Public Lane review, as well as the next progress update regarding the previously completed Fly-Grazed Horses review.

It was also noted that the scrutiny programme for 2022-2023 had been confirmed at last week's Executive Scrutiny Committee meeting, and that the Crime and Disorder Select Committee had been allocated the review of Tree Asset Management (which would follow the completion of the Bonfires on Public Land review).

AGREED that the Crime and Disorder Select Committee Work Programmes for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 be noted.

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64/21**

Chair's Update

The Chair had no further updates.

