

Review of Neighbourhood Policing

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee

Final Report

February 2015

Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

SBC Council Plan 2014 – Community Safety – Objective - Reduce crime and the fear of crime

The Safer Stockton Partnership Community Safety Plan 2014-17 outlines the joint work that SBC, Cleveland Police and partners will undertake to deal with crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse related crime and anti-social behaviour. It includes the following relevant priorities:

1. Reduce Anti Social Behaviour
2. Reduce Violent Crime And Robbery
4. Reduce Criminal Damage
5. Reduce Alcohol Related Crime And Anti Social Behaviour
6. Reduce Domestic Abuse

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

The review will focus on the operation of Neighbourhood Policing within Stockton-on-Tees.

This is to examine the impact of funding reductions and the recent Force-wide restructure on the presence of visible, accessible and locally known police constables and police community support officers, and how this will impact on the achievement of the Borough's Community Safety Plan.

It is important to note that the Chief Constable has operational independence in relation to the deployment of officers and resources.

Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report presents Cabinet with the outcomes of the review of neighbourhood policing undertaken by the Committee during the municipal year 2014-15.
- 1.2 For the period 2011-15, the national police service has seen a significant reduction of 20% in the Government grant it receives. For Cleveland, this has meant a requirement to find savings of approximately £26m in real terms over the same period.
- 1.3 In response to this, Cleveland Police has undergone a period of major change. Since 2010-11, significant savings have had to be made and there are further reductions in spending planned for the medium term. To respond to these pressures the Force has reduced the total number of police officers, PCSOs, and staff members available to it, and undertaken a wide ranging restructure. The review was undertaken in order to understand the impact of the funding reductions and this restructure on Stockton Borough.
- 1.4 Within Stockton this has led to the creation of an Integrated Neighbourhood Team bringing together neighbourhood officers and PCSOs with volume crime detectives in order to provide a flexible team to meet demand.
- 1.5 There is still a focus on providing a neighbourhood-based policing service, however this must be balanced against the requirement to respond to a wider range of issues and meet force wide priorities.
- 1.6 The levels of crime and disorder have fallen consistently in recent years, however there are signs that this may be levelling off. Stockton Borough's performance remains strong when compared with the other Tees Valley authorities. The range of issues dealt with by the police and partners continues to be complex and all demands must be addressed, particularly protection of the vulnerable.
- 1.7 It is therefore important to recognise the new shape of neighbourhood policing and how services are being delivered, and ensure that the police are able to focus on the most important issues. The excellent partnership working that already exists, and the maintenance of good operational relationships, will become ever more important, as will managing public expectations.
- 1.8 It is clear that the role of 'neighbourhood policing' has changed significantly and it is important to define this more clearly for the local community.
- 1.9 The Committee has made a series of recommendations in order to make further improvements, particularly around the use of communication. The Committee recommends that:
 1. **as part of its overall consultation and engagement strategy, Cleveland Police and the Council should ensure a consistent approach to communications, including:**

- a) a consistent approach to the use of social media by local neighbourhood teams, using the good practice that exists in the Force;
 - b) the Council's Community Safety Manager and Police keep under review information sharing with the Council to ensure it remains effective and any changes in key contacts are communicated in a timely manner;
 - c) a recommendation to all Members that they should keep up to date with changes in their local areas, including by accessing Cleveland Police's 'My Neighbourhood' website. A link to this should be included on the Council's intranet;
 - d) and that following the election, all Members consider what, if any, additional, appropriate methods of communicating with their local police team are required.
2. Cleveland Police should provide annual updates on the policing of Stockton Borough to all Members, and this should take place using the existing update session when the Police and Crime Commissioner consults all Members on his Budget and Plan;
3. a) the increased range of responsibilities of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams be noted, and that work to define and explain the revised role of neighbourhood policing be supported;
b) that all Members recognise the recent changes, and use their key role in communities to explain the role and capacity of local police teams;
4. a) the Committee notes and values the work of the Community Safety Team, and Members should continue to receive regular ASB patrol updates from the community safety team and maintain links with their local ASB officer;
b) the Committee notes and values the work of the Safer Stockton Partnership, and the importance of maintaining representation from all appropriate bodies.
5. the excellent partnership working between the Council and Cleveland Police be recognised and supported.
6. a) Cleveland Police should regularly monitor and share with partners the Public Confidence Survey results and other related consultation feedback
b) That work be undertaken by the Police and Crime Panel to further understand changes in public confidence, expectations, and fear of crime issues.
- 1.10 The Committee wishes to place on record its support and appreciation of the work of Stockton's Neighbourhood Policing Team, and its partners in Community Safety.