

Crime and Disorder Select Committee
Overview Meeting 2023
27 July 2023
Adults, Health and Wellbeing

Context

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

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

- 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 health lives

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

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

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

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>

ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Director – Ann Workman / Carolyn Nice

Relevant services include:

- Community Safety & Regulated Services (Trading Standards, Licencing and Environmental Health)

Council Plan 2023-2026

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

The key priorities for the Adults, Health and Wellbeing are attached at Appendix 1.

Emerging Issues

Service delivery is influenced by a range of internal and external factors that develop over time. Emerging challenges and opportunities are summarised as follows:

Crime and Disorder Overview

Ensuring that Stockton on Tees is a safe and welcoming place to live, work and visit is a key focus for this authority. Much has been done to help tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in Stockton on Tees, working closely with our partner agencies including Cleveland Police. We know that this is a priority for our communities and we strive to reduce the number of victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. The impact on victims can be both significant and long lasting. Knowing this motivates us to continue in our collective partnership efforts to make Stockton-on-Tees a safer borough for all.

Despite the efforts made and the development of partnership working, significant challenges remain and more must be done to tackle crime. In Stockton on Tees between July 2022 and June 2023, there was a total of 20,820 crimes reported in Stockton on Tees, which is an increase of 2,663 crimes (or + 14.7%) on the same period the previous year. Police generated crime, which includes crimes such as drug offences, public disorder and possession of weapons has increased by 413 crimes in comparison with the previous period, giving total police generated crime figure of 4236 offences, up 10.8%. Overall, there was a total of 25,056 crimes reported to Cleveland Police in the period July 2022 to June 2023, which was equal to 3,076 (14.0%) more crimes compared with the same period last year.

Comparing the number of crimes recorded in the period July 2022- June 2023 versus July 2021- June 2022, there were more of the following crime types recorded in the Borough: violence against the person; robbery; theft; criminal damage and arson; public disorder; trafficking of drugs; and possession of weapons.

Comparing the number of crimes recorded in the period July 2022- June 2023 versus July 2021- June 2022, there were fewer of the following crime types recorded in the Borough: Sexual offences, bicycle theft and burglary. Compared with July 2022- June 2023 versus July 2021- June 2022, the largest reduction (-6.4%) in Police recorded offences in Stockton-on-Tees was in relation to sexual offences.

Despite an increase in reported crime within the borough, we are aware that 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. More must be done however to improve the rates of recorded offences and support partners.

To gain a national comparison on how Stockton on Tees is performing against other partnerships, data has been obtained from the Home Office. This is a database which 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 March 2023 and shows that Stockton has a crime rate of 114.5 crimes per 1,000 of the population which is higher than the most similar group average (97.5 crimes per 1,000). 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 for the last financial year.

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. Up to the end of June 2023, reports of anti-social behaviour to Cleveland Police have decreased by 13.4% when compared to the previous 12 months.

In the last financial year to March 2023, 3,692 Service Requests were recorded by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Community Safety Team as ASB (including noise and alcohol issues). This is equal to an overall increase of 461 incidents (+14.3%) in the last year. In the same comparative period, the number of begging incidents was 967, equal to +117; and the number of rowdy/nuisance behaviour incidents was 1,091, an increase of 11 incidents. Whilst we do have an increase in the demand on Council services, the majority related to complaints about aggressive begging in town centre areas now covered by a Public Space Protection Order introduced in April 2023.

Public Space Protection Order

In April 2023 Stockton Borough Council introduced its first Public Space Protection Orders(PSPO) within the borough. A PSPO is intended to deal with a particular nuisance or problem in a particular geographical area where the behaviour is detrimental to the local community's quality of life, by imposing conditions on the use of that area. Following a scrutiny review by this committee in 2022 and a needs assessment the same year, cabinet approved plans for a PSPO in both Stockton Town Centre and Norton Village which came into effect in April 2023 following overwhelming public support during consultation. The PSPO introduced two new measures to tackle both aggressive begging and the consumption of alcohol within defined geographical areas of the towns.

The launch of the PSPO has been met with overwhelming positivity and support from the public and the businesses operating within both areas. The approach to enforcement of the PSPO is over three phases. Since April 2023, the team have issued 112 instructions to individuals in breach of the PSPO to cease their behaviour. Only 30 instances required a formal warning to be issued and only 17 of those required further action in the form of a fixed penalty notice. As a result of this approach, reports of aggressive begging and alcohol related disorder are reducing.

Protect and Prevent

Protect and Prevent are key parts of the wider government CONTEST counter-terrorism 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 this year and to key partners in education and community-based services. In addition to this, a programme of engagement continues within schools and additional briefings have been carried out at Riverside College, Durham University and other educational establishments. Following an assurance audit undertaken by the Home Office earlier this year, our approach around prevent and processes around Channel in particular have received full assurance status.

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 productive 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 extremism.

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 following our successful assurance and compliance assessment.

A new area of focus for this year will be on the Protect aspect of the CONTEST strategy. Also known as Martyn's Law, there is pending UK wide legislation that will place a requirement on those responsible for certain publicly accessible locations to consider the threat from terrorism and implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures.

Community Safety & Regulated Services – Priorities, Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the challenges that continue on an international, national and local basis compounded by external events, 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 has been developed with partners and is now in place which identifies six key challenging areas of focus for the all-member organisations in the 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. To help us achieve this, internal restructuring of services has meant that the majority of frontline regulatory areas are now working much more closely together to achieve the authorities priorities.

The first of these priorities is to support in earnest the development of our town centres. To do this, we will **maximise the effectiveness of the additional investment made in our community safety related services to protect residents, businesses and the investment in our town centres.** As highlighted, in April 2023 we implemented a Public Space Protection Order in both Stockton Town Centre and Norton Village. We will continue to robustly police instances of alcohol fuelled disorder and aggressive begging in order to ensure our town centres remain a safe and welcoming place for visitors.

Secondly deliberate fire setting harms our 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.** In 2023 we will again pledge our support to the new arson reduction strategy of Cleveland Fire Brigade in order to continue and build on the good work already achieved to date.

Thirdly Violent crime is 70% of the of the total cost of crime in Stockton-on-Tees and we continue to see increases in Stockton on Tees. 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 placed additional duties on councils to lead on the development of new local strategies to tackle serious violence in their area through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Court Act. In order to ensure we meet this new duty, we have developed a **new serious violence strategy in partnership with other responsible authorities and the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV).** We will adopt 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.

An area of focus linked to serious violence in Stockton on Tees is the challenges and impacts associated with organised crime groups. Stockton on Tees, in particular the Ropner Ward has been chosen for the latest in a Home Office pilot via Cleveland Police to tackle organised crime by adopting a new framework approach. This area has been selected due to the impact that organised crime is having on this community. Clear, hold, build (CHB) is a framework for bringing the tackling of serious and organised crime threats into neighbourhood policing. It also involves partners and the community in delivering and sustaining reductions in serious organised crime and related crime. CHB uses a place-based approach to understand the totality of serious and organised crime threats. It provides a model that partnerships can use to work in a more structured and coordinated way with partners. It also ensures that the community is involved in the response and has a say in the interventions that impact local areas. The aim of the program is that the local response to serious and organised crime is sustainable and moves beyond conventional enforcement tactics. Stockton Borough Council will be a key partner in delivering this approach and it will also be used as a catalyst for new approaches to service delivery and powering our communities.

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 2023/2024 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.

New draft legislation was released in May 2023 (Terrorism (Protection of premises) Bill) and we will continue to work with government, partners in Counter Terrorism Policing North East and colleagues in the Homeland Security Group arm of the Home Office to develop this legislation to ensure it meets the needs of our communities but also recognises the existing demands on local authorities and the need for additional support and resources to deliver effectively.

Trading Standards

The primary aim of the Trading Standards Service is to provide a safe and fair-trading environment for the benefit of both consumers and reputable businesses within Stockton-on-Tees. This protection is provided in relation to virtually the full range of personal and household goods and services, from the purchase of daily necessities to the arrangement of a mortgage.

Whilst only a relatively small service, Trading Standards operates right across the full range of consumer protection legislation and some of the main areas of responsibility include:

- Fair Trading – the pricing, labelling, description and quality of goods and services.
- Product Safety – product safety requirements that cover all consumer goods.
- Food Standards – labelling requirements, health claims, compositional standards and allergen controls for all food products.
- Animal Feed – the registration and inspection of designated animal feed establishments, including feed manufacturers, transporters and livestock farms.
- Weights and Measures – the weight marking of goods and the accuracy of weighing and measuring equipment in use for trade.
- Age Restricted Sales – age limits for the sale of certain products, including cigarettes, vapes, alcohol and fireworks.
- Tobacco, Vapes and Alcohol Controls – reducing the availability and supply of illicit and counterfeit tobacco, vapes and alcohol.
- Scams Awareness – work to prevent residents, especially those that are vulnerable, from falling victim to rogue traders and mass marketing scams

Counterfeit and Illicit Tobacco

The trade in illegal tobacco damages legitimate business, makes tobacco more accessible to children and undermines tobacco control policies by offering a cheaper option for those who might otherwise see price as a reason to stop smoking. It is dominated by organised crime groups, linked to other types of criminality and can have a devastating effect on individuals and local communities. As part of Operation CeCe, Trading Standards is working in partnership with both National Trading Standards and HMRC, to disrupt the trade in illegal tobacco at a local level.

Over the past year, Trading Standards have obtained closure orders against three local premises involved in the supply of illegal tobacco. Two of these closure orders followed on

from the seizure of over 210,000 cigarettes and 42kg of hand rolling tobacco. A further trader was prosecuted at Teesside Magistrates Court, whilst another case is currently pending trial at Teesside Crown Court.

Disposable Vapes

The rapid rise in the popularity of disposable vapes over the last few years has created an additional workload for Trading Standards both in terms of the prevalence of illegal vapes and concerns around sales to children under the age of 18. Over the past year, officers have removed over 2000 illegal vapes from sale around the Borough. The main reasons for non-compliance are when the vapes have a tank size in excess of 2ml, contain nicotine in excess of the legal limit of 2%, display incorrect safety warnings or have not been notified to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Regulatory activity around the use of disposable vapes is undertaken closely with Stockton Borough Council Public Health Team to ensure both approaches to tackling the growing use of vapes amongst young people are complimentary of each other.

Rogue Traders

One of the primary aims of Trading Standards is to protect residents from rogue traders, particularly those who target older or vulnerable residents in their own home. A number of long and complex investigations have been completed in the past year, including one which saw a local trader jailed for 19 months for a range of unfair trading and fraud offences in connection with sub-standard and incomplete landscaping work. Another case saw a builder given a 12-month prison sentence suspended for 2 years for participating in a fraudulent business, whilst in 3 other cases the court awarded over £20,000 in compensation to residents who had been ripped off by rogue traders.

Licensing

The focus of the licensing regime remains keeping our communities safe, the service continues to process over 2000 applications and respond to over 1000 service requests annually. Due to proactive work in and strong communication links made with the licensed trade the number of problem premises is low.

This has allowed the service to dedicate resource to additional initiatives, working with CURV on the reduction of serious violence and violence against women and girls. This included procuring and delivering violence reduction products such as metal detectors, bleed control kits and anti-spiking materials to premises throughout the Borough.

The service resumed alcohol underage sales test purchasing this year post pandemic, with the help of an underage volunteer attempting to purchase age restricted products. Operations are targeted to premises where intel has been received, or areas where underage drinking is visible. Unfortunately, the service has had a number of positive sales and as a result the action taken with licence holders has then followed the engage, educate, encourage and enforce route, ranging from formal warnings, to cautions and recently the removal of management from a premises, these operations will continue throughout this year.

Since the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) team was formed in 2021 the service has played a significant role in the disruption of locations and persons of interest. This year an officer has remained single point of contact for this purpose and collaboration has increased. This has been very successful in intelligence sharing and disruption of activities, especially around licensed drivers and vehicles being used for or involved in drugs organised crime and child exploitation activities, in some cases revoking licences from those involved.

This year the service has been involved in consultation and discussions around Yarm, Norton and Finkle Street redevelopment, giving advice on the offer of outside eating and drinking, markets and safety to make these areas great place to visit. The service has also contributed to Crest Advisories research into the Night Time Economy, providing qualitative data and qualitative interviews to help us better understand how safety can be increased for people using and working in the night-time economy especially in these areas.

The service continued to assist in growing the economy by giving free pre application advice to those considering a business which requires a licence. The Street Trading policy review is currently underway, after various stages of consultation. A review of the current policy is required with an aim to prevent obstruction of the streets and ensure the safety of persons using them whilst recognising the importance of businesses to the local economy and the character of the area.

The Animal Activities Business sector continued to grow including an increase in home dog boarding and dog breeding applications. Alongside helping business to meet the DEFRA conditions and legislation the service continued to investigate unlicensed dog breeding. A prosecution file for unlicensed dog breeding was recently prepared. Proactive work in this area shows a high number of puppies for sale in the Borough from unlicensed breeders, there is a responsibility under the legislation to but also to those legitimate dog breeding businesses we licence, to take action.

The service collaborated with the Training and Employment Hub, to offer a first of its kind training package to encourage new private hire and hackney carriage drivers to the trade, the first cohort in March was a success with nine applicants completing the courses, assessment and being granted licenses.

Working with Dementia Friends, education and training was delivered to over 500 licensed taxi and private hire drivers, who attended free 1 hour session on Pan-disability and Dementia awareness. The trade have already suggesting topics form next years training offer and research into sessions on men's mental health is now underway.

Environmental Health

The Environmental Health Service remains fully staffed and committed to delivery of its statutory functions as well as working with residents, businesses, and partners to deliver services beyond those statutorily required to improve and protect health. The service remains committed to protecting local consumers and food businesses, addresses health and safety concerns, protects out local environs with reference to land, air and water quality and protects the health and welfare of local animals via our animal welfare service. The service also provides exceptional leading local delivery for pest control and pest management.

Whitton / Cowpen Landfill Sites

In 2022/23 works commenced at two of the closed landfill sites which are managed by the Council. These works have been set in place to discharge our lawful duty to manage these sites as well as ensuring the protection of the local environment and residents. Currently the two sites being upgraded are the leachate lagoon at Cowpen and the gassing site at Whitton.

The new gas abstraction system at Whitton comprises of a series of gas wells, with interconnecting underground pipework to transport the landfill gas to the flare compound. This creates a controllable and adjustable suction for the site and correct delivery pressure for burning the gasses or venting to atmosphere. The new gas wells are easier to access for

monitoring and the amount of extraction can be altered to balance the gases on the landfill site.

The infrastructure works to the site fulfils the local authority liability for landfill gas management, and ensure the site is managed in a safe and environmentally safe manner. The system enables monitoring of the performance of the system, and forms part of a gas management plan of monitoring and maintenance for the next fifteen years (or more). These works were completed in June 2023.

At Cowpen the lagoon works remain underway and when complete will ensure the Council can discharge the leachate to the water treatment plant which abuts the holding lagoon. Works are expected to be completed late summer 2023.

Air Quality

Poor air quality remains a key area of work for the Environmental Health Service and is now widely accepted as one of the most prominent public health concerns in the United Kingdom. In Stockton we continue to monitor for air quality at several key sites including three real-time monitoring sites as well as 14 static sites across the borough. Each year these monitoring results are reported to Defra and published via the Council ASR (Air Quality **Annual Status Report**). The current 2022/23 report has been submitted to Defra for ratification and shows a general downward trend in pollution levels. This is expected to be due to the improvements in road vehicle technology, electrification of road fleet and the 41 measures which are undertaken by SBC to improve local air quality.

To bolster this work and raise public awareness in June 2023 the Council participated in the National Air Quality Day with officers reaching out to the public in Ropner Park, Preston Park and via the Council social media accounts. Work was also undertaken with the Council fleet drivers and local taxi fleets. In total this resulted in over 8,500 contacts being made to promote this key area of work. In addition to this Environmental Health are leading on an educational project which will see primary schools receive lesson plans for air quality, the erection of anti-idling signage at key locations, Civic Enforcement Officers supporting this work as well as the programme being shared across the Northeast via NEPPP (Northeast Public Protection Partnership).

In 2023 the Council will also publish it's first Air Quality Strategy which is a new statutory requirement from 2023 onwards. This will reflect the monitoring already undertaken, the project work already in place and will be contributed to by the Council multi-departmental Air Quality Working Group.

Food Hygiene

Consumer safety remains a priority for Environmental Health with both food safety and occupational health and safety being key areas of work. The Environmental Health Service has delivered all food premises inspections, complaint investigations and notifications of infectious disease – this has encompassed 1468 distinct pieces of work for the period. In addition to meeting these required interventions Stockton remains a leading local authority for proactive sampling of food premises/food stuffs to ensure consumer protection:

Authority	Sample Type										Sample Number	Credits Used	Credit Allocation	Credit Variance	% Credit Use	
	E1	E2	E3	F1	F2	F3	W1	W2	W3	M1						
Darlington Borough Council	2	10			24	9						45	1185	9205	8020	13
Hartlepool Borough Council	5	12			58	44	13	19				151	3850	8300	4450	46
Middlesbrough Council	12	23			20	15						70	1720	10277	8557	17
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council		18	1		58	19		3				99	2660	8719	6059	31
Stockton on Tees Borough Council	14	98			67	120						299	8465	17803	9338	48
Total	33	161	1	0	227	207	13	22	0	0	664	17880	54304	36424	33	

F1: Food Screen (10 credits)

F2: Food Basic (25 credits)

F3: Food Complex (35 credits)

W1: Water Screen (10 credits)

W2: Water Basic (20 credits)

W3: Water Complex (25 credits)

E1: Environmental Screen (10 credits)

E2: Environmental Basic (25 credits)

E3: Environmental Complex (35 credits)

The Commercial Food Safety Team will also be delivering an innovative and forward-thinking pilot in 2023/24 for the delivery of free level two food safety training for local businesses. This training will upskill local businesses and lend to not only additional consumer protection but also economic development and business resilience.

Social Care Protection Group

Environmental Health along with colleagues from across SBC and the NHS continue to lead on the Social Care Protection Group which remains in place post pandemic to ensure that social care providers are supported as much as possible by multi-agency professionals to develop their services with access to expert advice and information.

The group support the development of programmes and interventions for Social Care settings based upon the pressures or needs identified across the sector by providers or partner agencies. The group acts as a conduit for the distribution of information to Social Care providers to ensure a consistent understanding and approach to communications.

In 2022/23 as well as hosting provider forums for information sharing and deamination the group activity has been aimed at additional vaccination provision, delirium projects, summer and winter preparedness seminars and resident enrichment via the activity programme.

APPENDIX 1: COUNCIL PLAN – KEY PRIORITIES 2023-2024 (ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING)

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

We have identified these key priorities for 2023 to 2024 to help us achieve this vision. This year we will:

- maximise the effectiveness of the additional investment made in our community safety related services in order to protect residents
- consider and develop a new serious violence reduction strategy in partnership with other responsible authorities
- give due consideration to the new Protect Duty placed on local authorities as part of the wider national counter-terrorism strategy
- support the Arson Reduction Strategy in partnership with Cleveland Fire Brigade
- support people to remain safely and independently in their homes for as long as possible and offer help to people who are feeling lonely
- continue to prevent and relieve homelessness