

CLEANER GREENER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4th December, 2013

Present:-	Councillor Mrs Gillian Williams – in the Chair
Councillors	Councillor David Allport, Councillor Peter Hailstones, Councillor Mrs Hilda Johnson, Councillor Miss Chloe Mancey, Councillor Miss Marion Reddish, Councillor Mrs Sandra Simpson and Councillor Andrew Wemyss
Officers	Dave Adams (Executive Director – Operational Services) Sarah Moore (Partnerships Manager) Trevor Nicoll (Head of Recycling and Fleet Services) Elaine Moulton (Deputy Development Control Manager) Catherine Fox (Community Safety Officer) Martin Stevens (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Kyle Robinson.

Cllr Tony Kearon sent his apologies as Portfolio Holder.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. WORKPLACE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY

The Community Safety Officer introduced a report on the Workplace Domestic Violence Policy. She stated that the policy was an essential part in raising awareness of the under reported crime and demonstrated to staff a commitment to their welfare by the Borough Council. Domestic violence affected one in four women and one in six men and claimed the lives of two women a week in England every year. There were approximately eight suicides per week due to the issues involving domestic violence. Some of the effects that domestic violence could have included increased sick days, stress, decreased productivity and a raise in absenteeism. It was often the case that a victim did not realise they were in an abusive relationship. A number of questions were contained within the report for the Scrutiny Committee to consider including:-

Whether there was anything in the Policy that needed to be enhanced / amended?

How best could the policy be implemented at the Council?

How could the information to staff at the Council be cascaded?

How best could the Council deal with perpetrators?

A Member asked about the organisation, 'Arch North Staffs.' In response the Community Safety Officer stated that they were a support organisation which offered one to one appointments. They offered a twelve week programme to victims. They employed a Children and Young people worker, a perpetrator worker and a male worker. They had two staff which worked in accident and emergency and an early intervention worker. They also had a school based programme which worked in the areas of ensuring healthy relationships, working with teenagers and older children living at home.

A Member asked the Community Safety Officer how the problem of domestic violence compared to ten years ago. In reply, the Community Safety Officer stated that in her opinion the situation was worse. It was an under-reported crime though but part of her role was to raise awareness of the issue.

5. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Chair welcomed the Police Commissioner, Mr Matthew Ellis to the meeting.

Mr Ellis stated that he had been in post for the last twelve months. His early reflections indicated that Staffordshire Police were a good Police Service. He believed the Police Force to be good at operational policy but improvement was needed in how the budget was spent. He also believed improvements could be made in the procurement procedure and improving technology within the force. He was investing £19 million on Police computer systems in the next 15 months. He was taking steps to put the budget firmly on track.

Mr Ellis stated that he had stopped the forced retirement of Police Officers who had conducted 30 years' service. He believed this policy to have been damaging the organisation. He had also scrapped the planned merger with West Midlands Police. He was pleased to report that thirty new Police Officers had been recruited in the last six months. One of the areas he was addressing was the fragmentation of the sector. He wanted to improve the integration of the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Courts. He also wished to improve the arrangements the Police had with Local Authorities and the Health sector where there was huge potential for increased partnership working. Introducing new technology would significantly improve the capacity of the Police to improve the integration of the Police within the Public sector. He was aware that where costs were cut in one area it was causing significantly more money to have to be spent to fill the gap. From some of the savings that had been made in the Police, he was offering a £2 million incentivisation fund. He hoped that this would help change the way agencies operated. As an example he cited mental health services in North Staffordshire. It was evident that some people were in the criminal justice system when really they should have been receiving mental health care treatment before a crime had ever been committed. There had been a phenomenal response from organisations applying to the incentivisation fund.

Mr Ellis outlined some of the priorities contained within the Safer Communities strategy which included a desire for early intervention, reducing re-offending and increasing public confidence. Part of increasing confidence in the Police was about transparency. He had recently set a precedent by publishing an internal report about how improvements could have been made to the Policing arrangements of a Football match. The crackdown on motorists not having insurance had led to a

significant reduction in people not driving without insurance in the area. He was pleased to report that the insurance companies were in discussions with him about offering a special insurance rate in Staffordshire.

Mr Ellis stated that the Police Operation in Burton which had targeted over 30 high end criminals had led to a 70% reduction in crime. Twelve months later it was 50% of what it had been in the previous year. The Community had felt their Town had been returned to them. He was looking at ways of improving the way the Police recorded crime figures and making the process more accurate and detailed. By removing targets the Police had more time to focus on more important areas. Investment was being made in Neighbourhood Watch schemes. He expected local Police Commanders to spend more time engaging with the public. He also wanted to improve the criminal justice process for victims and witnesses, who often found this worse than the original crime. There were a total of forty one different organisations which contributed to the process of victim support. Presently the system was based on types of crime rather than on the profile of the victim. He wanted to improve on the number of young people who were offered support when they had been a victim of crime. He thought improvements could be made to the speed of justice and the reduction in the number of cancelled cases which was a real inconvenience to witnesses.

A Member asked in which areas the Commissioner had been able to make savings within the Police. In reply, the Commissioner stated that there had been a structures review which had reduced costs and the policy of early intervention and reinvesting savings to change the cycle of spending.

The Chair asked the Commissioner about the recent unsuccessful bids by the Borough Council to the PCC Local Policing Fund because of the eleven projects put forward only one had been successful. In response the Commissioner stated that the funding distribution had been managed by an independent body, called the Community Trust. They had been three and a half times oversubscribed for the funding available. Over half of the applications had not been funded. There was a chance of more money being made available and so he was happy to look at any proposals the Borough Council had if they were sent direct to his office. The Partnership Manager offered to co-ordinate a written submission to the Commissioner detailing the projects which it would like to receive funding.

A Member asked about enforcing yellow lines. In response the Commissioner stated that he was in discussions regarding awarding extra powers to PCSOs, who were often frustrated through their lack of powers. He wanted to improve customer service. Complaints took considerable resources to handle and so if these could be reduced not only would the service be improved but resources would be freed up to focus on service delivery.

A Member asked if there would be a further reduction in Police numbers in the future. In reply, the Commissioner stated that it was inevitable that there would be less Police numbers in three years time than the present numbers. They would be spending less time on paper work administering targets though and so they would spend more time on the frontline than in the last decade. Work was being completed on the estate strategy and the concept of elite Special Constables of which he was hoping to recruit 200 in the near future.

The Chairman thanked the Commissioner for attending the meeting.

6. VACANT AND DERELICT BUILDING ENFORCEMENT

The Development Manager Team Leader introduced a report on vacant and derelict building enforcement. The report focussed on the Council's current powers in relation to vacant and derelict building enforcement and whether best use was made of the powers. She encouraged Members to bring to the attention of the Planning Service any buildings where action was needed to be taken.

RECOMMENDED: That the report be circulated to all Members of the Council for information.

7. COUNTY WIDE JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Head of Recycling and Fleet Services introduced a report on the Stafford Waste Partnership Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy. The partnership was now recycling and composting over 50% of the waste collected and had therefore achieved its core objective. The partnership was now addressing how this figure could be improved even further. The process for refreshing Newcastle's Waste Management strategy was currently in the development, being led by a cross party group of Members. The consultation period was between 21 October and 13 December 2013. The new strategy would hopefully be adopted early next year. It was important to have aspirations to increase recycling as it was always cheaper to recycle than to use landfill.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Recycling and Fleet Services stated that the Hanford Site at Stoke was leased to the Borough Council until 2020.

A Member asked if the partnership was looking to work collaboratively with other authorities. In response the Head of Recycling and Fleet Services stated that they were always trying to work across boundaries and were looking to work more with authorities within Staffordshire and beyond Staffordshire where appropriate. A Member stated that it was important to look at what the best authorities were doing so the Council could learn from them.

8. MAGISTRATES COURT MOVE WORKING GROUP

The Committee Officer reported that at the last meeting of the Magistrates Court Move Working Group the view of the group was that they should disband. The Police were of the view that much of the work of the group was being duplicated by the Local Area Partnership. The Court had been in place for over six months and the initial terms of reference of the group had been to mitigate the risks before the move took place. The group were however aware that crime figures in the Town had increased since the court move. The Police were gathering data on whether the people committing the crime correlated with them having attended the court on the same day. This information would be available in the New Year and it was suggested that the Scrutiny Committee could receive a report on these statistics. The Committee could also receive reports in the future on any areas of concern and potentially setup a Task and Finish Group if appropriate.

The Committee were in agreement that the Magistrates Court Move Working Group in its current form should disband, with the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Communities

Scrutiny Committee receiving reports in the future on areas of concern. The Police Commissioner stated that he was taking an interest in the crime figures and would be working with the Police to see what further measures could be taken to reduce crime in the Town.

RESOLVED: That the Magistrates Court Move Working Group in its current form should disband, with the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Communities Scrutiny Committee receiving reports in the future on areas of concern.

9. **WORK PLAN**

The Executive Director for Operational Services stated that consideration should be given to whether the Waste and Recycling Strategy should be considered at a special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee as it was such a substantial item.

The Chair stated that the Chief Executive had suggested that the Committee should look at the Planning policy relating to Take Aways as part of their future work programme.

10. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business within the meaning of Section 100 B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**COUNCILLOR MRS GILLIAN WILLIAMS
Chair**