

CITY OF DONCASTER COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT CRIME & DISORDER OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY, 2024

A MEETING of the COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT CRIME & DISORDER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the Civic Office, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY, 2024 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Gemma Cobby

Councillors Nigel Cannings, James Church, Ken Guest, Debbie Hutchinson and Steve Cox

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Bill Hotchkiss, Head of Service, Communities Safer Stronger  
Rachael Long, Theme Manager, Crime and Community Safety  
Jane Mordin, Co-ordinator Public Health and Prevention  
Andy Collins, Co-ordinator Public Health and Prevention  
Superintendent Peter Thorp, South Yorkshire Police  
Detective Chief Inspector Tom Bright, South Yorkshire Police

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aimee Dickson, Emma Muddiman-Rawlins and David Nevett

|     |  | <u>ACTION</u> |
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| 41. | <u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>  |               |
|     | There were no items on the agenda where the public and press were to be excluded from the meeting.   |               |
| 42. | <u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>   |               |
|     | <b>RESOLVED</b> That Councillor Cobby declared that she worked as a volunteer in a community organisation that supported women and girls against violence. |               |
| 43. | <u>MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 16TH FEBRUARY AND 5TH OCTOBER 2023.</u>   |               |

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|     | RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 <sup>th</sup> February and 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2023, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.  |  |
| 44. | <u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u>  |  |
|     | There were no public statements made.   |  |
| 45. | <u>CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE REPORT</u>   |  |
|     | <p>The Crime and Disorder Committee was provided with a detailed presentation to accompany the report, addressing the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Centre specific work;</li> <li>• Reducing anti-social behaviour;</li> <li>• Tackling domestic and sexual abuse;</li> <li>• Tackling serious and organised crime;</li> <li>• Reducing violence and violent crime;</li> <li>• Reducing substance and alcohol misuse; and</li> <li>• Reducing crime and re-offending.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair and Members of the panel thanked the officers and South Yorkshire Police for the informative presentation and focused their questions and discussion on the following areas:</p> <p><u>Decrease in overall and retail crime</u> – the Chair commenced debate by highlighting it was good to see the overall decrease in crime figures. She continued by referring to the Panel meeting in 2023 when it specifically addressed retail crime and it was reported that there had been a reduction in figures since the peak in August 2023. The Panel was of the opinion that the increase in retail crime was due to the cost of living crisis. In response, it was reported that the City Centre had received an increase in resources including plain clothed police officers placed in hot spot areas and the sharing of CCTV, when appropriate, to assist with reducing this area of crime. It was explained that when a repeat offender served a prison sentence for this crime they tended to be released after a short period of time and there was then high dependency on partnership working to support the person and avoid reoffending.</p> <p>With regard to crimes against retail personnel it was noted that the Safer Doncaster Partnership was pushing for legislation to suitably address these crimes.</p> <p><u>Total recorded crime</u> – it was confirmed to the Panel that Doncaster was only exceeded by Sheffield, to which Members expressed concern due to Sheffield having a much larger population. It was stressed that in the last year Doncaster had seen a decrease in almost all crime</p> |  |

types and that partnership working was exceptionally strong which was relied upon when addressing particular areas of reported crime.

Under reporting in retail crime – a Member with experience of working in retail expressed concern that there was a myth that a theft was not worth reporting if it was below a certain value. It was stressed that this could be the retailer’s policies but confirmed that the Police did not have a value or limit to report crime. It was stressed that some retail workers did not have the confidence to report crime as it could be, for example, someone they knew and lived near in the same community.

The Panel noted that a conference for local retailers had been provided in 2023 to specifically address reporting crime, close partnership work and information and sharing CCTV through a designated portal. To allay the Members’ fears, it was noted that there was a strong appetite amongst retailers to report offences, to support cases for arrest and possible prosecution.

Frenchgate “Rights of Way” system – the Panel questioned the benefit and impact this would have on anti-social behaviour in the City’s shopping centre. It was explained that when addressing the position with the new shopping centre manager, officers had been provided with a front facing and behind the scenes tour. It became evident that it was very difficult for security to closely monitor and cover the whole centre, therefore it was proposed that at the close of business certain areas would be zoned off to create a right of way. It was stressed that access to the bus and railway stations and the 24 hour car park would not be affected by the “Rights of Way”.

South Yorkshire Police satellite office – it was confirmed that a touch down base for the Neighbourhood Response Team and South Yorkshire Police would be operating from the French Gate Centre to maintain easier visibility. With regard to giving people in the City centre the correct support, partners were working together to ensure this was available whether it be mental health or substance misuse support.

Street drinking – It was confirmed to the Panel that local businesses and ward members had reported alcohol related problems in Conisbrough therefore a plan for intervention and prevention was adopted followed by an enforcement approach to resolve the situation. Members noted that the approach used in Conisbrough would be used in other areas but it was highlighted that intelligence was relied upon before any intervention could be put in place.

A Member expressed concern that the same people, for many years, were regularly drinking in the same place at the same time and questioned what engagement had been established with these people. It was explained that the Complex Lives Team worked frequently with the same people and would regularly report the position to local teams, who in turn would provide a programme of required support, including

substance and alcohol misuse treatments. The support available for people with complex lives was outlined including ensuring someone had a safe place to live and it was highlighted that recently, after a period of 5 years, the team had managed to persuade a client to move into accommodation. It was stressed that once a person accepted accommodation, it was imperative they remained safe and did not return to the streets.

Response to anti-social behaviour on Bank Holidays – it was acknowledged that since the Neighbourhood Response Team was established in 2006, Members of the Team had never worked on bank holidays. It was explained that the number of calls would be monitored over the next bank holiday and if there was a business case for the Team to work on these holidays it would be assessed, but members were also reminded of constrained budget resources.

In response to concerns relating to there being many residential issues from noise and parties which could create community tensions, South Yorkshire Police, explained that responding to any incident was very much dependent on the call. All reports of noise and harm over this period would be risk assessed like any other issue.

Off road bikes, quad bikes and battery powered bikes – It was accepted there were many challenges when addressing this nuisance behaviour and the most productive way to catch offenders, was whilst they were riding around. It was difficult to pinpoint the right place and time but additional to responding to complaints, operations were undertaken in hotspot areas and cross border. It was stressed that the safety of all riders when trying to apprehend the offenders was imperative during any operation or response.

The Partnership continued to address target hardening work, for example strategically erecting barriers but access rights must be maintained, for example access for wheelchair users. Other preventative measures included “Forecourt Watch” which was the prevention of selling fuel and “Storage Yard Watch” to prevent easy storage of vehicles used by offenders.

Skylarks Estate – In response to the recent Partnership and residents meeting, a Panel Member, on behalf of residents forwarded a thank you to South Yorkshire Police and partners for the positive work that had been undertaken in this area.

Rape figures – Further to a Member questioning why rape assaults had increased, it was reported that both local and national activity had encouraged a greater reporting of violence against women and girls. It was explained that detail behind the data had showed a decrease in residential settings, but there had been an increase in historic rape cases being reported. Further detailed would be provided to the Panel following the meeting.

Organised crime groups – the Panel acknowledged this issue could not be addressed in detail due to the nature of the crime but wished for an update on how operations were being undertaken. It was noted that the criminal activities by these groups exploited every area of human life from drugs to waste management but the Police and its partners held appropriate tools and powers to address the crimes being committed. The Panel was assured that there was strong focused activity across the region with a dedicated team in Doncaster. The Panel was also informed of successful operations that had reduced drug dealing from homes and recovery of firearms leading to a number of prosecutions and prison sentences.

CCTV – How cameras were used to gather evidence about certain crimes was discussed, for example, monitoring fly tipping to gathering evidence about serious crimes to aid investigations and prosecutions. It was accepted that the use of the cameras would not solve every crime but helped to build a picture. With regard to CCTV and Ring doorbells on people's homes they were also found to be invaluable again for securing evidence. A Member believed that some housing providers would not allow CCTV to be fitted to their properties and wished to outline how useful they could be.

The issue of CCTV signals being relayed back to central control quickly was addressed including the challenges when relying on new technology eg. 4G, noting that it could take up to 24 hours to this to materialise.

EPIC – it was confirmed to the Panel that funding streams gave a clear plan that the service would continue. It was noted that next year there could be a focus on the Balby area.

ID Scanners in licensed premises – How the voluntary ID scanners were being used in five of Doncaster's venues was discussed. It was explained that the scanners held finger prints and therefore identify whether the person wishing to enter the venue was banned from the premises. Use of this system has helped reduce drug dealing, as dealers do not wish for their prints to be recorded. One of the bars using this system had recorded approximately 2 barred people per month trying to access the premises whereas before the figures were much higher when having to rely on just door staff alone to identify them.

Reducing substance and alcohol misuse – with regard to accessing services, the vast majority were self referrals but some were helped by family and friends. It was noted that Aspire encouraged people to access services themselves rather than being forced into treatment. Work was being undertaken with the Integrated Care Board to ensure people presenting themselves at Doncaster Royal Infirmary were also referred to Aspire. The Panel was informed how support services

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|     | <p>worked closely with the complex lives team to avoid duplication of assessments and work. Employment support and wrap around services for clients was also funded through Aspire to reduce barriers into work.</p> <p><u>Revision of the Doncaster Treatment and Recovery System</u> – The Panel was informed that the current contract had come to an end, therefore providing an opportunity to address potential barriers, for example, reducing the time for assessments and receiving a pathway into treatment much sooner, including mental health. It was noted that new hubs had been established in Bentley and Mexborough ensuring increased accessibility. The new contract was due to start in April 2024 for a period of 5 years.</p> <p><u>Reoffending</u> – In response to a question relating to support for people leaving prison, it was explained that extensive work was being undertaken to address support for reoffenders. The Panel was also reminded of the departure lounge at Doncaster Prison and from what has been learnt, a similar approach that could be used at other prisons in the areas was discussed.</p> <p><u>Reducing youth offending</u> – it was explained to Members that EPIC was working with young offenders, for example, to divert young people away from knife crime and the use of off road bikes. Work was also undertaken through the Partnership providing a multi-agency approach, with engagement in education settings by South Yorkshire Police and Neighbourhood response Teams. Members noted that the Youth Offending Services had layers of support for young people who were in danger of being exploited with the MACE meeting addressing numerous cases. It was stressed and acknowledged that early intervention had a massive positive impact on families, their lives and across communities.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the Panel was satisfied that it had given due consideration to the information contained in the report and that the discussion, be noted.</p> |  |
| 46. | <p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></p>  |  |
|     | <p>The Senior Governance Officer presented the Scrutiny Work Plan and Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions to the Panel for it's consideration. She also requested that if Members were aware of any areas they wished to give consideration to in the new Civic Year to inform both herself and the Chair.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the report, be noted.</p>  |  |

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Dated: \_\_\_\_\_