

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 27TH OCTOBER, 2022

A MEETING of the COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICE, WATERDALE, DONCASTER DN1 3BU on THURSDAY, 27TH OCTOBER, 2022, at 1.00 pm.

PRESENT:

Chair: Councillor Gemma Cobby

Councillors Nigel Cannings, James Church, Julie Grace and Gary Stapleton

IN ATTENDANCE

Bill Hotchkiss, Head of Service, Community Safety
Superintendent Ian Profitt, South Yorkshire Police
Rachael Long, Crime and Safer Doncaster Theme Manager
Karen Shooter, Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategic lead

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Debbie Hutchinson, Tracey Moran and Emma Muddiman-Rawlins

1. To consider the extent to which the public and press are to be excluded from the meeting.

There were no items.

2. Declarations of Interest, if any.

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Communities and Environment (as the Crime and Disorder Panel) Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 9th February 2022

RESOLVED:- that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Public Statements.

There were no public statements made.

5. Crime and Community Safety update report

The Panel gave consideration to a report and presentation that provided the priorities and performance updates in respect of the Safer Stronger Doncaster Partnership and the current position in respect of the Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls agendas.

It was noted that the Community Safety Strategy priorities were as set out below with detailed information being provided on each area by Superintendent Ian Profitt, South Yorkshire Police, Bill Hotchkiss, Head of Service Communities Safer Stronger and Karen Shooter, Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategic Lead:

- Priority 1 - Tackling domestic and sexual abuse;
- Priority 2 - Reducing anti-social behaviour;
- Priority 3 - Reducing crime and re-offending;
- Priority 4 - Tackling serious and organised crime;
- Priority 5 - Reducing substance and alcohol misuse; and
- Priority 6 - Reducing violence and violent crime.

Members sought clarification on the following issues:

Domestic and sexual abuse Gypsy and Traveller representatives – it was explained that active recruitment was currently being undertaken to appoint a representative and that if suitable applicants were received they would look to appoint from within the Gypsy and Traveller Community. It was noted that the appointed person would need to be culturally aware and sensitive and training would be provided to the person appointed. The Panel was pleased to note that good relationships were already in place in Public Health with the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Charitable Womens Aid – in response to concern expressed by a Member with regard to the number of safe accommodation places, it was explained that Doncaster had an 8 unit refuge. Sometimes the units were occupied by a single person or a family. Additional to this were 6 disperse units. Funding support had been increased but so had the complexity of support. The Commissioning model was based on best practice but creative in what was being requested.

In relation to, for example, the Charitable organisation Phoenix Womens Aid, it was noted that it was a valuable partner that could access and secure funding the Council was unable to achieve. The organisation take referrals from the Domestic Abuse Hub, for counselling, outreach and provision of safe accommodation.

“Get Home Safely” – The Panel raised the Campaign, promoted by the UNITE union that encouraged night time employers to provide a safe home return to staff members. It was acknowledged that it was a good campaign to promote and therefore it would be added as an item for discussion on the next Violence theme reduction group, the link would be added to the violence against women and girls web page and Business Doncaster has been requested to

promote it with local businesses. It was noted that the content was similar to the Doncaster Council's guidance and responsibilities and would be linked to future work.

Duty to protect employees – it was acknowledged that all employers had a duty to protect their employees and the Council's "My SOS" lone working GPS tracking device was highlighted.

Best Bar None Scheme – the number of young people who worked in bars to the early hours was noted and the issue was to be addressed by the Violence Reduction Group to address how it could work closely with members of the scheme to ensure pub and club owners ensure their staff get home safely.

Anti-social behaviour - It was noted that Police report ASB was showing a decline with a reduction of 24% in the twelve months up to August 2022. However there was clearly some under reporting, which was being addressed to ensure increased confidence, in turn providing early intervention. With regard to the Council's data it showed a lot of and increasing work with early intervention for example with minor neighbour disputes before severity increased. Across Doncaster there was a good use of specific Orders, for example, Tenancy warnings and ASB warning letters.

Vulnerability – incident data was addressed at Board meetings where situations were mapped and scored to provide intervention and support to repeat victims.

Electric Scooters and off road motor bikes– It was acknowledged that dealing with the correct usage and enforcement relating to electric scooters was challenging and frustrating across the majority of Police forces and recognised there was the need to drive change with legislation. How different Police forces addressed dealing with electric scooters was highlighted, particularly when they were being used for criminal activity. Electric Scooters were not for use on roads and people when buying them may not be informed of this and not aware that they were breaking the law. An example of safe use was one City Council encouraging their use in bike lanes to ease congestion, which was acceptable and in line with some cities in mainland Europe. It was noted that generally there was also a mix of people commuting into their place of work using this mode of transport. Until guidance or legislation was developed, in the meantime people would be educated as much as possible on their use.

With regard to off-road motorbikes, having no insurance was enough to seize a bike.

Fly tipping – The Local Authority was making good use of covert cameras with South Yorkshire Police providing support, for example, arrest days following crimes being committed.

Neighbourhood policing – it was reported that newly recruited police officers would be joining Police teams across the County therefore the numbers were due to increase before the Christmas period.

Real Help Scheme – in response to a question it was explained that the scheme provided help and support to the homeless and was run and operated by the changing lives partnership. It was acknowledged that both partners and staff needed to be more aware of the scheme to ensure its full potential and usage.

CCTV – It was explained to the Panel that from a Council perspective there was a wide range of public realm cameras. These were used to prevent crime, public safety and anti-social behaviour. The monitoring was effective with people's privacy and monitoring responsibility taken very seriously. CCTV images could be forwarded to the Police, under strict guidance and data protection Privacy Agreement, to be used as evidence if a crime had been committed to aid prosecution. It was noted that there were approximately 100 actionable items each month but not all were used.

Reporting neighbours causing anti-social behaviour – In response to Members concerns that in some areas anti-social issues could be so bad people may have to be rehomed due to feeling so vulnerable in their own homes. It was explained that as much as possible was

being undertaken to prevent such behaviour and stop it escalating. It was noted that a recent campaign, “report it so we can sort it” had been very successful.

It was acknowledged that Doncaster would love to have its own Police off-road motor cycle team but it was a South Yorkshire Team that responded. Generally it used to be a seasonal issue but there had been an increase of quad bikes being used at night, which was currently being investigated through a partnership plan. Certain areas were targetted, including use of large boulders to stop entry onto certain public pathways and signage. Enforcement is used as much as legislation allows.

Serious and organised crime figures – in response to a question relating to figures pre-lockdown in comparison to now, it was advised that the information could be provided following the meeting.

Impact on South Yorkshire Police protocols and training – the Panel was informed that the current investigations undertaken in the Metropolitan Police had seen a ripple effect through all Police Authorities. South Yorkshire Police had a new Values Framework with the key elements being Fairness, Integrity and Trust, leadership training had been enhanced and improved from first line supervisors to the top of the organisation with a leadership academy being launched to ensure first line supervisors provide a good impact culture within a team. The Professional standards department dealt with people that do not provide high standards expected and if a member of staff was arrested they were suspended until the matter was resolved.

Re-launching actions – it was accepted that if schemes and actions were relaunched, the reasons why were important and should be better communicated, whether it was because a scheme was successful or had not worked for a particular reason. It was also stressed that sometimes the Partnership was having to respond very quickly to new funding opportunities.

Drug trafficking offences – it was explained that the figures relied upon the amount of drugs found and ceased, therefore the Police Authorities were not accepting that it has declined. Drug trafficking case work was undertaken by a regional crime unit, National Crime Agency and neighbouring Police Forces who they work closely with to deal with this offence.

Organised crime work – it was clarified that this criminal element focused on individuals with a mapping process that identifies people involved.

RESOLVED: That the information provided and discussion, be noted.

6. Flood risk update and winter preparations

The Panel received a presentation from the Drainage and Streetworks Manager that provided a flood risk update and winter preparation booklet which had been designed to provide resources and information to Councillors regarding the Borough flood risk.

Following the flooding of 2019 a full investigation of how the flooding occurred was undertaken with the findings setting the agenda for the Flood Recovery programme consisting of 42 proposed schemes across the Borough. The report and booklet presented provided an update on progress on the schemes and winter readiness.

The presentation addressed:

- Flood resilience programme highlights;
- Partnership Funding and current funding picture; and
- Individual area and main river schemes;

It was highlighted that:

- The Local Authority could not fund everything therefore it worked in partnership with the Environment Agency;
- Some local authorities were able to fund from their capital funding, for example, Birmingham City but it had a much different landscape to Doncaster, eg. urban flooding from highways;
- People who were regularly flooded needed to ensure they were ready to help themselves in the initial stages;
- Ensuring that surface water is kept on the highway before properties;
- Public sewers were the property of Water companies, for example, Yorkshire Water, Severn Trent and Anglian and historically set up for a 1 in 3 year storm;
- Dykes and rivers were the responsibility of the Environment Agency or Internal Drainage Boards;
- In Doncaster only 1 porch had flooded in the last 3 storms;
- The Winter Maintenance Team provided a service with 60 staff on a shift pattern, eg. provide road gritting, they were also there to respond and react to flooding events. The Emergency Planning Team have Council staff trained in specific roles to respond to flooding emergencies; and
- Following floods, the Highways Teams determine whether roads could be reopened.

Members addressed the following issues in detail:

Bentley Ings refurbishment project – It was noted that it was an Environment Agency project which had been a fantastic investment for Doncaster at a cost of approximately £6m and deals with normal rainfall water, winter drainage, land drainage and Bentley corridor. It stopped water backing up in normal time and an explanation of how it worked and future requirements to further aid the position for future flooding events was provided.

Funding – Members acknowledged the current funding position and shortfall to complete required flood alleviation schemes.

Gully Cleansing – These were currently checked once in every 18 month period. Members noted that a GIS system had been deployed during gully cleansing identifying the amount of silt removed. Following 2 cleanses of data this would identify which gullies required more attention with a tailored programme being developed. This would lead to a more efficient gully cleansing programme.

Sewer flooding – it was outlined that in 2019 6 properties across 4 separate areas were impacted by this issue. It had been caused by surface water accessing foul sewers and creating blockages. This risk could not be forecast. During a flooding event it was investigated and forwarded to the relevant Management Authority for management and maintenance.

Partnership working – it was stressed that the Local Authority held excellent working relationships with partners, for example, Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency.

Flood Wardens – It was noted that flood wardens were driven and set up in each area by volunteers with the Local Authority and partners supporting during an emergency. The flood wardens played a vital role, identifying risks and informing the community.

Vulnerable people living at home – During an emergency the Silver Command was established and within that team were representatives from all required partners. The appropriate partner would be able to identify the vulnerable who required assistance and put measures in place for assistance.

Sandbags - were provided by local suppliers and provided by the response staff however following an emergency they were collected by the Streetworks team therefore they ask for patience from residents for them to be collected. With regard to sandbag disposal it was dependent on the emergency. For example, in 2019 there had been mass river flooding and contamination therefore they were disposed of at landfill. It was also cheaper to dispose of than recycle at this time prior to price increase in sand. In January 2020 there was no river flooding and a small amount of sandbags were contaminated therefore only a small amount went to landfill and the remainder were cleansed ready for redistribution.

RESOLVED: that the report and discussion, be noted.

8 Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan and the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Senior Governance Officer presented the Scrutiny work plan and Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions. The Panel was asked if it could give consideration to the areas it wished to address at the next Crime and Disorder Committee following the information provided earlier in this meeting.

RESOLVED: that the documents be noted.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____