

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING**

Monday, 6 December 2021

PRESENT: Councillor B Clelland (Chair)

Councillor(s): T Graham, Anderson, D Burnett, K Dodds,
S Dickie, F Geddes, Reay, K McClurey and H Weatherley

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): A Geddes, J Green, S Hawkins, H Kelly,
J Turnbull, R Waugh and A Wheeler

CPL9 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

CPL10 NORTHUMBRIA POLICE UPDATE - SUPERINTENDENT JAMIE PITT

The Committee received a presentation from Superintendent Jamie Pitt from Northumbria Police on the Northumbria Police Control Strategy for 2021-2022 which will support the information provided in the presentation.

The Strategy has been revised to reflect the importance of partnership working. Every 3 years Northumbria Police pull all of the data together working with partners and identify similar threats and what areas need to be co-ordinated.

There are 6 policing priorities in the Control Strategy 2021-22:

- Protect the Vulnerable
- Effective Justice
- Prevent Crime and Disorder
- Engaged Communities and Trusted Police
- Intelligent Policing
- Outstanding Organisation

Superintendent Pitt advised that in order to achieve the priorities they will look at the following themes:

- Threat Risk and Vulnerability
 - Under this theme they will look at Drugs which is a massive cross cutting theme in terms of major organised crime and we have become an accelerated site and have just started testing on arrest. 75% of those tested have tested positive for drugs and need to be engaged

- and work needs to be undertaken to target the people causing the most harm.
- Cyber Crime is another theme where areas such as online paedophilia, ransom ware, phishing emails and the dark web causes issues and is an example of great work which can be done when working in partnership.
 - Serious violence such as knife crime is another area where there is a focus and is subject to government funding.
 - Terrorism is another area where partnership working is critical.

The Committee were advised that currently all Local Authorities were revising their Strategic Assessments at the moment and the police will look to use the data to come together with interactive plans.

The Committee requested that information be provided to them on who were the best people to contact with regards to issues of Crime in their wards, in particular anti-social behaviour.

It was also requested that it would be useful to know where there have been areas of work undertaken whether difference has been made in that particular area.

It was suggested that keeping lines of communication open was one of the best ways to keep partnership working well, whilst ward members don't need to know operational level day to day working communication is key.

RESOLVED - That the comments of the Committee and the information presented by noted.

CPL11 COMMUNITY SAFETY PRIORITIES AND PROGRESS - ADAM LINDRIDGE

The Committee received a report to provide a brief overview of the key activities that have been co-ordinated and delivered by Gateshead Community Safety Board within the last six months to address the strategic priorities outlined in the Strategic Partnership Plan 2022/23. The report also highlights the impact of, and some of the potential emerging themes, from Covid-19 in relation to Crime and Disorder within Gateshead.

The Strategic Themes were agreed by the Community Safety Board for 2020-23 are:

- Violence, Exploitation and Abuse
- Thriving Neighbourhoods and Communities
- Community Cohesion and Resilience

In the first six months or 2020/21 recorded crime in Gateshead has reduced by 1% compared to a 3% increase across Northumbria.

Crime levels in Gateshead continue to remain on par with local authority areas across South of Tyne and the rate of crime per 1000 population remains comparable to our 15 Most Similar Family Group national average.

Crimes against the person have increased on last year – with violence rising by 4%, robbery increasing by 15% and sexual offences up 30%. Demand-related call to Northumbria Police relating to public safety-type issues (such as mental health, suicides and substance misuse has increased in the last 12 months) with more complex and multiple needs being identified. Police and Council have also seen increased reporting of anti-social behaviour.

Feelings of safety and perceptions of how the Council and partners work together to tackle community safety issues remain positive.

A review of the locations in which crime and ASB incidents are committed has shown more than half of all crime that takes place in those neighbourhoods that are classified 'Extremely' or 'Very Vulnerable' under Thrive agenda categories – and has increased proportionally compared to last year.

The report highlighted some of the activities which have been undertaken this year by partners to address the priorities of the Board include:

- Serious Violence (including Criminal Exploitation and Knife Crime)
 - Supported Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit with the refresh of the regional Insight Report and Violence Reduction Strategy for Year 3
 - Knife Crime Serious Violence GRIP Funding will be used for high visibility targeted patrols and problem solving within specific harm hotspots within Inner West and Central Gateshead with an aim to implement to step change in activity to suppress and reduce serious violence
- Domestic Abuse (including Violence against Women and Girls)
 - Gateshead Strategic Domestic Abuse Forum has been re-established and has started to progress some key areas of work required as part of the Domestic Abuse Act. This includes the ongoing development of a draft Needs Assessment and Strategy to improve our support offer linked with Safe Accommodation
- Anti-Social Behaviour (Youth, Adult and Place-based ASB)
 - We have started to plan and undertake a multi-agency review of anti-social behaviour to ensure victim receive the best possible service
- Locality Based Tasking and Problem-Solving Arrangements
 - We have a robust operational planning and tasking group which continues to operate effectively with strong representation with a range of statutory partners and Council services. In addition, Community Safety now regularly attend Northumbria Police's Threat Harm and Risk Meetings to ensure we are aware of broader crime and disorder issues affecting Central Area Command
- Hate Crime and Tension Monitoring
 - Continuing to deliver actions outlined in the Hate Crime Strategy and Action Plan for Gateshead 2019-22 there is a focus on increasing awareness of reporting, increasing referrals to victim support service and promoting hate crime education.
- Preventing Violence Extremism, Radicalisation and Terrorism

- Recently a comprehensive self-assessment has been undertaken relating to Prevent to help further reduce the risk of vulnerability to radicalization. This included refreshing our risk assessments, offering targeted training and community engagement activities and re-establishing a local working group to oversee compliance with statutory duty.

It was queried whether the digital voice video around awareness in Domestic Abuse could be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead in schools, also perhaps a TV advert and other communication methods to be used so people are aware of where they can report any issues. It was noted that TV adverts may be cost prohibitive however, definitely leaflets can be put out in GP Surgeries/Dentists and we are working with the Police on this area of work it is maybe something we could discuss with the Home Office.

It was queried whether Prevent training was given to all council employees. It was noted that this is mandatory now for all new employees to receive training.

It was queried whether officers monitored social media as this is what would be used for under-age drinking sessions are arranged on social media. It was noted that we know where the hot spots are and we work with the police to try and disrupt before it gets out of hand.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted
 - (ii) that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to receive six-monthly Community Safety updates
 - (iii) that any issues which may arise which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to scrutinise be noted for a future meeting

CPL12 COVID 19 UPDATE - ANDREW TATE/IAN STEVENSON

The Committee received a report and presentation to update on the position with regards to Covid 19.

The Committee were advised that quite quickly at the early stages of the Pandemic the Economic Development working with Regulatory Services and Environmental Health established a business support hub to help and allow businesses to stay open.

Demand has fallen away recently as businesses have opened. We have administered £77m of support to 1200 businesses. During the summer of 2020 £40m of direct grants to business and since Summer 2020 a further £36m has been further delivered to business particularly those that have been forced to close or those operating at reduced capacity.

An additional restrictions grant was also administered and the first allocation totalled £5.835m. The grant was issued to:

- Businesses forced to close but outside the rates list
- Suppliers to hospitality, accommodation, leisure and events
- Taxi drivers and Driving Instructors
- Registered childcare providers
- Other impacted businesses with fixed property costs
- Home based and mobile hospitality businesses and in person services

There was a second top up of this grant of £1.081m with top up payments to:

- Pubs, cafes, clubs, restaurants and hotels
- Indoor leisure venues
- Taxi drivers

The remaining additional restrictions grant is being used to support business recovery.

In terms of recent impact there was some concern with regards to the withdrawal of government support along with the Furlough scheme coming to an end in September and the 5th and final round of Income support for Self Employed ended in September and the repayment holiday for Government loans ending for many businesses.

There is uncertainty about new strains of the virus, fears of peak infection rates over the winter and further business restrictions continue to impede the recovery. The ability of businesses to survive or thrive during the pandemic has been heavily influenced by the sector in which they operate. Businesses providing in-person services such as retail, hospitality, leisure and event businesses have been particularly impacted. Existing sectoral challenges have been exacerbated and supply chains have been severely impacted. Generally larger businesses have been more resilient due to greater resources and capacity.

Digital business and those providing business services have found it easier to adapt and introduce new ways of working to mitigate impact. Manufacturing and health sector operators have continued to operate during the pandemic. There continues to be demand for commercial property to support growth, both small units and larger foot print office and industrial premises. Recorded business investment and job creation levels for 2020/21 are comparable to pre-Covid reporting periods.

Working Gateshead, our person centred, place based universal employment support approach which is open to any Gateshead resident regardless of employment status continues to deliver both remotely and face to face. It has strong links with the Area Co-ordinator in the community hubs and robust referral mechanisms. In partnership with Gateshead Older People's Assembly, Gateshead Council has worked to establish a Gateshead 50+ employability hub to help people over 50 access employment, training and health and wellbeing opportunities. This age cohort has been proportionately more adversely affected during the pandemic. Working Gateshead has received 1212 contacts from residents for help preparing for work,

returning to work, dealing with redundancy or to progress in work. Intensive one to one Working Gateshead employment support was provided for 550 unemployed and economically inactive residents. 290 residents have been helped into employment by Working Gateshead since July 2020.

Between August and October 2021, 95 resident have been supported into Apprenticeships, 18 placements have been sourced for Traineeships, 2056 learners have been supported to stay on programme, Gateshead Council have been awarded over 15 apprenticeship contracts with other local authorities.

The Council is acting as DWP Kickstart 'Gateway' to help businesses access funding to create job placements for 16-24 year olds receiving Universal Credit, which has resulted in:

- 25 business support to access the Kickstart Scheme
- 96 job placements created
- Assisted 33 young people to commence work so far

Kickstart vacancies have been created from a variety of businesses across a range of sectors, for example:

- Cintel Global, a multi-disciplinary creative production studio located at PROTO, has filled all five of their vacancies including positions such as Junior 3D/Technical Artist, Junior Social Media Marketer, Junior Web Developer
- Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art has filled three of their five vacancies including Facilities Admin Support Assistant, Facilities Maintenance Technician and Trainee Programme Technician
- Arcus Studios, an animation studio based in the Northern Design Centre, has filled all three of their vacancies including Junior/Ass Project Manager, Junior Technical Animator/Rigger and Junior 2D Animator and due to the calibre of candidate coming forward to their roles they have created a further two roles.

With regards to community support 6 community hubs are operating with an emergency food distribution system in place, welfare calls were made in writing to over 36000 residents and telephone call were made to almost 27000 residents. Thousands of volunteers have been connected to help out and over 18200 food parcels have been made up and delivered, 1400 cook n eat boxes and 1400 school meal packed lunch parcels. School Meal Vouchers were provided to children who were eligible for Free School Meals during the February, Easter, Summer and October holidays and over 4300 prepay cards to households with children on free school meals. Between late August and September, the Council has delivered 14 community vaccination pop ups in communities where intelligence indicates the take up of the vaccine has been low. Further pop ups are planned for December.

Since November 2020 there have been requests to help from an estimated 3000 volunteers. 450 individual volunteers through the central process. 200 (average of 10 people per request) from groups/corporate volunteer days and 50 (average of 12 people per group) from environmental groups.

The Council since November 2020 has been contacting residents who have reported

as testing positive for Covid 19, initially to check on the welfare of the individual but as the pandemic has progressed the Council continued to take on more responsibility for track and trace locally.

It was queried whether there has been any evidence of fraud in the area relating to grants for business. It was noted that the Council had put in place quite robust systems and it is not thought that there have been any cases of fraudulent claims made.

It was noted that thanks should be placed on record to all of the officers involved. It was queried why people come to the Council for help with gaining employment, would it be the Job Centre who would traditionally carry out this role. It was noted that often cases that the Council deal with may be parked with a company outsourced by DWP given the barriers they have to gaining employment. These are the people that the Council would help with the schemes they have in place.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the comments of the Committee in relation to this report be noted.
 - (ii) That the results of the Covid-19 survey be brought to the January 2022 meeting.

CPL13 BRIGHTEN THE DAY - HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES & FOOD PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report and presentation on the delivery and impact of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021 for their views and the announcement of the programme for 2022.

A video of the work undertaken was shown to the Committee.

DfE funding allocation of £850,000 for 2021 in Gateshead to fund Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) over the Easter, Summer and Christmas School Holidays for benefits-related Free School Meal (FSM) recipients and vulnerable children.

The holiday club places are available for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week for 4 weeks (Summer Only) and must include health meals (one healthy meal a day meeting the School Fund Standards guidance), enriching activities (provide fun activities with opportunities to develop skills and knowledge), physical activities (which meet the Physical Activity Guidelines), nutritional education (awareness of healthy eating and how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food, signposting and referrals: (to other services and support).

In total there are 7200 children who are eligible for school meals, living in 4500 households across the Borough. The programme also aims to help additional families who are struggling to make ends meet but do not access this benefit.

A HAF (Holiday Activities and Food Programme) Steering group meets regularly to plan and co-ordinate the Brighten the Day programme. Representatives on the steering group include University of Northumbria, Education, Public Health, Children's Social Care, Early Help, Libraries, Leisure, Catering Services and VCS

organisations.

The Easter programme was delivered remotely due to Covid-19 restrictions in place.

The programme delivered the following:

- 1750 Cook n' Eat food boxes delivered to FSM eligible families with fresh ingredients and recipes for 5 meals for a family of 4
- 1500 activity packs of crafts, books and sports equipment
- Tyne and Wear TV on freeview broadcast content aimed at 3 different age groups for local children and young people over the Easter holiday period
- A limited number of schools, community, church and sports organisations delivered small scale face to face holiday clubs, these were exclusive to know FSM eligible families connected to the venues and providers
- A club at Cedars School for children with physical and learning difficulties was also run for the first time.

During May half term face to face delivery took place at a small number of venues using outdoor facilities, including Gateshead International Stadium with 560 places, delivered to 250 children attending 2,600 hours of activities in bubbles. Half term delivery was not a requirement of the DfE grant.

The summer clubs in Gateshead were delivered in 52 venues; 23 community organisations, 12 schools (including 3 secondary and 2 special schools), 5 sports venues and 3 church organisations. Over 21000 places were delivered across the 6 week period to approximately 1450 children per day.

Activities included Sports, Dance, Work Skills, Cooking, Cycling, Circus Skills, Bush Forestry, Open Spaces, Environmental and Educational Visits, as well as Cook N Eat, online activities, exercises and games.

The Council's Catering Service complimented the food provision within community venues with hot food in 7 schools, healthy packed lunches at 11 venues without catering facilities and provided healthy snacks to the Active Kidz programme and our pop-up sports activities.

The expanded programme in 2021 included new venues – Cedars and Gibside special schools, new coaching providers – Gateshead Storm Rugby Club and new activities – Learn to Swim @ Gateshead Leisure Centre (for Y5 & Y6 children who missed out on school swimming provision).

The DfE arranged a virtual visit for the Permanent Secretary, Susan Acland-Hood on 24 August 2021. The visit covered the departments priorities and policies and included a live stream of holiday clubs taking place. DfE representatives were able to speak to children, teachers and providers to received instant live feedback.

The arrangements over the Christmas period have had to be scaled back for several reasons, including the guidance with regards to Covid.

However, there will still be some fun activities including ice skating, live reindeer and

cook n eat boxes. Several schools and community venues will be delivering projects over the Christmas holiday.

It has been confirmed that the Holiday Activities and Food Programme will continue, following the successful nationwide delivery of the 2021 programme. The spending review announced over £200million per year for the continuation of the holiday activities and food programme, providing enriching activities and healthy meals for disadvantaged children during school holidays.

The Committee expressed its thanks to the team of officers working in Gateshead and commented that the film and programme was excellent.

RESOLVED - That the information provided in the report, film and presentation be noted.

CPL14 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report on the work programme for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year. The Committee asked that a report be brought to the Committee in March from the new allotments officer and that the updated position with regards to repairs be brought back in April.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) that the information contained within the work programme report be noted.
 - (ii) that any additional reports be added to the work programme as highlighted.
 - (iii) that an updated report be brought to the next Committee to identify any further issues the Committee may wish to consider.

Chair.....