

## GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

### HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 11 September 2023

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Clelland (Chair)

Councillor(s): T Graham, A Geddes, F Geddes, D Burnett, H Weatherley, H Kelly, S Dickie, V Anderson, P Maughan, A Wintcher, S Gallagher, P Burns, D Welsh, K Walker and L Brand

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor(s): J Turnbull and K Dodds

#### **CPL77 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the last Committee held on 19 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

#### **CPL78 LIFELONG LEARNING**

The Committee received a report and presentation providing an overview of Gateshead Council's post-16 education offer and the impact on residents.

Updates were provided in respect of the following:

- **Delivery areas:** this includes community learning, apprenticeships and essential skills.
- **Local delivery:** it was highlighted that Gateshead support the highest number of learners compared to neighbouring authorities.
- **Success stories:** the Committee noted that Learning and Skills have a success rate 23% above the national average and are Ofsted rated 'good'.
- **Student overview:** 44% of learners have a learning difficulty, disability or health condition. 49% of learners live in a deprived neighbourhood.
- **Impact across the 2022/23 Academic Year:** the Committee were advised that 76% of young people enrolled are attending an employability related course with 98% of 16-18 year old apprentices securing full time employment on completion of their apprenticeship.
- **Staff:** it was highlighted that staff recruitment and retention within the service is excellent.

The Committee questioned how residents can access the learning and skills provision; Mel Crosby (Principal of Learning & Skills) advised that the service use direct and indirect marketing techniques in addition to social media. It was also explained that a lot of learner recruitment is a result of word or mouth and that the service has a good reputation in the local community.

The Committee were also advised that the service does a lot of work within Gateshead's schools to identify trends in learning gaps which can be developed for learners aged 16-18; the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on educational attainment was also discussed.

The Committee commended the work of the service but queried how the service is funded. Mel Crosby advised the Committee that funding streams come from the Department for Education and the ESFA; it was also explained that funding is allocated annually and there is no requirement for the service to bid for money.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Committee noted the benefits to individuals, communities and employers of adult education.
- (ii) That the Committee recognised the unique and high-quality service offered by Gateshead Council.

## **CPL79 COMMUNITY SAFETY PRIORITIES UPDATE / PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee received a report providing an overview of some key activities coordinated on behalf of the Community Safety Board since April 2023 to tackle strategic priorities outlined in the Partnership Plan 2023/24.

Updates were provided in respect of the following:

- **Crime Performance:** The Committee were given an overview of crime and disorder in Gateshead from April – May 2023. It was noted that recorded crime in Gateshead had increased by 4%, equivalent to 240 crimes.
- **Progress to date:** Details of progress made across the strategic priorities were provided, this included tackling serious violence, thriving communities, protecting people from harm and strengthening governance/accountability.

From the report, the Committee also noted the information provided in relation to domestic homicide reviews that had been conducted within Gateshead. The Committee were also advised that a Members Seminar is to be organised for Councillors to raise issues directly with Northumbria Police colleagues.

The Committee queried whether the current cost of living crisis had impacted on crime levels within Gateshead; Adam Lindridge (Community Safety Manager) explained that instances of shoplifting had increased according to the statistics; Adam advised the Committee that as part of the next update report more information would be provided on the 'drivers of crime';

Concern was noted by the Committee regarding call wait times to contact the Police; a discussion also took place on neighbourhood policing priorities. Councillors also noted that some constituents have had to wait until the next day or longer to receive a call-back or visit from the police when a crime is reported. The Committee acknowledged that Northumbria Police are working hard across the borough to deal with emergencies but commented that more assurances were needed for residents who report non-urgent/life threatening crimes and concerns such as bicycle thefts

and ASB.

A query was raised in relation to the safety of Council staff and Councillors; the Committee were advised that Gateshead Council's HR department are developing the existing policy for staff and member safety to ensure it remains current and relevant. It was also noted that employee policies are being developed to support staff who are victim of domestic abuse/assault. It was highlighted that a comprehensive in-house counselling support service continues to be available for staff and counsellors if needed.

The Committee discussed environmental ASB; it was reported that members had agreed to around £2million of additional funding being used to tackle the impact of environment on health, wellbeing, climate change, economic sustainability and in response to declining resident satisfaction with services. The Committee agreed to review the outcomes of this work in 12 months.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the Committee noted and commented on the contents of the report.
- (ii) That the Committee agreed to receive a further update in 6 months.
- (iii) That the Committee agreed to receive an update on the outcomes of work being undertaken to tackle environmental ASB in 12 months.

**CPL80 PARKING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received a report providing an update on pavement parking within Gateshead.

From the report it was proposed that the Department for Transport (DfT) plans to introduce legislation to allow all English highway authorities to adopt new footway enforcement powers however the timeline for that is unclear, as are the details about how it will work.

It was reported that DfT had conducted a consultation on pavement parking in 2020 and are still considering the responses to that. It was noted that the Council had submitted a response to this consultation (as agreed by Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020).

It was explained that if the Council does adopt the new powers, once granted, it is likely that a clear and robust policy would be required setting out the type of circumstances in which it would enforce and those in which it would not. The Committee noted that without this the Council would be overwhelmed with requests and complaints.

The Committee were asked to note that in some areas, parking partly on the footway (so that people can still safely get past) is sometimes a pragmatic solution. It was also stated that it is likely that given government's previous approach and the practicalities involved, that footway enforcement would need to be undertaken by Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) in person, rather than by "approved device" (e.g. the camera car).

It was also explained that this implies the need for a significant uplift in the CEO establishment, at time when the Council are finding it difficult to maintain staffing levels within enforcement. This would therefore involve significant additional costs, including additional supervision and back-office support to support these additional duties.

The Committee queried the visibility of current CEO's across Gateshead; some members advised that they rarely, if ever, see them out in Gateshead. Officers reiterated that recruitment and retention of CEO's within the service had been a challenge but provided assurances that the existing cohort of CEO's are working hard to cover hot-spot areas as well as monitoring the rest of Gateshead.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Committee noted the report.

**CPL81 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received a report which provided details on development of the work programme for OSC's and the provisional work programme for Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities OSC for the municipal year 2023/24.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Committee noted the Work Programme.

**CPL82 BREXIT UPDATE**

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Committee noted the report for information.

**Chair.....**