

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 December 2018 in the Council Chamber, North Norfolk District Council, Holt Road, Cromer at 9.30 am.

Members Present:

Committee: Cllr S Hester (Chairman)

Cllr V Gay	Cllr B Smith
Cllr R Shepherd (S)	Cllr P Grove-Jones
Cllr M Knowles	Cllr P Bütikofer
Cllr N Pearce	Cllr B Hannah
	Cllr N Smith

Officers in Attendance: The Chief Technical Accountant, the Planning Policy Manager, the Corporate Director (SB), the Head of Legal Services, and the Democratic Services & Governance Officer (Scrutiny) and the Policy and Performance Management Officer.

Members in Attendance: Cllr J Rest, Cllr R Price, Cllr J Oliver, Cllr S Arnold, Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, Cllr E Seward (portfolio holder for Finance, Revenues & Benefits) and Cllr S Bütikofer (Leader).

79. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr J English, Cllr A Claussen-Reynolds and Cllr R Reynolds.

80. SUBSTITUTES

Cllr R Shepherd for Cllr J English.

81. PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None received.

82. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14th November 2018 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

83. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

84. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To be taken, if necessary, at the appropriate item on the Agenda.

85. PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

86. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A MEMBER

None received.

87. RESPONSES OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CABINET TO THE COMMITTEE'S REPORTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS

None received.

88. ONLINE SCAMS UPDATE

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk; Lorne Green, was in attendance at the meeting joined by Norfolk Constabulary Cyber Security Advisor; Will Hewlett-Case, in order to provide an update on online scams within the district. They were also joined by Superintendent Chris Harvey, and inspectors Ed Brown and Teresa Futter for the Crime and Disorder update.

Questions and Discussion

The PCC began the update and stated that policing had changed substantially in recent years, with modern technology severely increasing the risk to children and vulnerable adults. He informed the Committee that digitally enabled criminality was increasing, with cases of the major defrauding of businesses becoming more common, it was clear that no one was immune from the dangers of online scams. As a result, it was stated that a business crime strategy was incoming.

The Committee was informed that up to £8m had been lost to cybercrime in Norfolk, and it was suggested that in most cases individuals often failed to report crimes so the amount could be far higher. The PCC stated that scams were often disproportionately aimed at vulnerable older people and it was therefore a priority to offer support to victims. He informed Members that he had used the Action Fraud helpline himself in order to test the service, and found that his call was answered in twelve and a half minutes by a call centre based in London. He reported that when required, victims were referred to their local county's victim support services.

The PCC informed Members that he held the title of Scambassador in order to help raise awareness of the dangers to the public from all types of scams in accordance with Operation Bodyguard, another project aimed at safeguarding the victims of scams and tackling fraud. Inspector Ed Brown informed Members that the operation had been established in Kings Lynn in 2017, and looked at referrals from the Action Fraud service in combination with data from Social Services to determine who was vulnerable and at risk in society. He added that the Constabulary were looking to progress the scheme in the new year and improve contact with victims. The PCC informed Members that he would increase funding of the scheme to cover the whole county, and would employ a new officer to manage the service. He then informed Members of the Norfolk Against Scams Partnership, whose aim was to make Norfolk a scam free county by raising awareness, issuing warnings and supporting the victims of scams.

Cllr S Arnold stated that she had been targeted by phone scammers, and asked what was being done to inform the public of how to deal with these types of scams. Superintendent Chris Harvey replied he personally received similar calls and emails, and always informed Members of the public to completely ignore suspicious messages. The PCC added that data was being used for crime mapping, and it was clear that most scams were originating from outside of the UK. The Superintendent agreed that most appeared to be originating from

overseas, and informed Members that Norfolk Constabulary were investing in technology to improve their crime mapping capabilities.

Cllr B Hannah suggested that businesses should do more to help fight scams. The Superintendent agreed and stated that businesses were trying, but he would like to see more support in this respect. Cllr V Gay raised similar concerns and stated that this type of crime was making people more distrustful and fragmenting society. The PCC stated that he would provide more funding to help spread the message about how the police were fighting scams. The Superintendent agreed and stated that he would speak to his Engagement Officer to help get the message out and increase confidence in the police and what they were doing to fight scams. Cllr R Shepherd stated that most of his nuisance and scam calls were dealt with through his telephone provider via a call screening service and advised others to do the same.

Cllr P Grove-Jones raised concerns that in cases where vulnerable individuals had been scammed, they were often too embarrassed to inform the police. She stated that she had personally received an unpleasant scam call and had been very impressed with the response from police. The Superintendent informed Members that there were two dedicated victim support Officers based at NNDC and encouraged Members to inform the public that they could be contacted at the help hub.

Cllr N Pearce asked how long it would take for Norfolk Constabulary to identify patterns in online scamming activities. The Superintendent replied that it was a difficult process and didn't happen often, but people impersonating Police Officers were often caught quickly. The Chairman suggested that scams appeared to be becoming more sophisticated, and asked if the district was moving in a general direction in terms of prevalence and prevention. The Superintendent replied that all types of scams were increasing, and it was crucial to get the message out to ignore suspicious calls and emails. The PCC and Superintendent stated that they would bring together their media teams to help spread the message as widely as possible in Norfolk. Cllr S Bütikofer added that Councillors were invited to join the Scambassador programme to help raise awareness of the issue.

Cllr S Arnold asked whether it would be helpful for people to forward suspected scam emails to the police. The Superintendent replied that it would be helpful if the public forwarded any scam emails to the companies and or organisations that the scammers were pretending to be.

89. CRIME AND DISORDER UPDATE

Superintendent Chris Harvey introduced the update and stated that there were 82 crimes per 1000 people in the UK, which fell to 70 per 1000 in the East, 61 per 1000 in Norfolk, and just 30 per 1000 in North Norfolk. It was suggested on the basis of these figures, that North Norfolk was still a very safe part of the country and this year had been a very quiet summer in terms of theft. The superintendent then informed Members that he had invested in teams that sought to stop crime on the roads, and stated that two couples had been caught by this team in the past year. He added that the North Sea helped to isolate the region, and reassured the Committee that there were no Heroin or Crack dealers in the district, which allowed the force to focus on alcohol related issues instead. The Superintendent stated that there was still work to be done, especially around assaults, which often occurred in existing relationships and remained the number one demand for police time, with up to five domestic abuse calls per day. On other issues, it was stated that suspicious circumstances reporting had been used to good effect, with the information supplied being used to stop crime in several circumstances. Finally, it was stated that there was one burglary reported every three days in the district, and one vehicle theft per week.

Questions and Discussion

Cllr P Grove-Jones informed the Committee that since losing its PCSOs, Stalham had seen a spike in crime. She then praised the work of the replacement Officer that was regularly visiting Stalham. The Superintendent stated that he was glad to hear that the Officer was regularly visiting Stalham, then acknowledged the spike in crime following the loss of PCSOs in the area, but informed the Committee that this issue had been resolved quickly.

Cllr J Rest commended the Police Officers in attendance for the low crime rate in North Norfolk, then raised the issue of knife crime and suggested that it was alarming to hear that armed police were being used to tackle the issue in London. The PCC replied that most knife crime incidents took place within the criminal community, and informed Members that Operation Gravity had led to the arrest of up to 800 people in connection with knife crime. He added that partnerships were important and the police must continue to work with Social Services to limit the causes of crime. The PCC then responded to earlier comments on the loss of PCSOs and stated that this was a regret of the service, but more Officers with full powers were in greater need. He stated that another one of his aims was to educate young people about the perils of knife crime, and a film had been made that he was using to tour schools throughout the county.

Cllr E Seward raised a question on North Walsham, he stated that the Town Council had paid for and improved the CCTV provision in the town which was frequently used by police, but due to the equipment being located in the town hall the police were not able to access the system at night. He added that the Town Council had offered to give the equipment to the police to keep at the station, and asked why there had been a delay in taking up the offer and whether it could be resolved. Inspector Futter replied that Norfolk Constabulary were currently looking at CCTV across the County, and didn't want to be seen as giving preference to a single station. Cllr E Seward stated that after the loss of PCSOs, North Walsham had a significant need for good CCTV. The PCC asked how many other communities had made similar requests. The Superintendent replied that unfortunately resources were not available at present to fund increased CCTV provision across the district, but he was looking at other ways this could be addressed. Inspector Futter reassured Members that she was keen to improve CCTV access and provision in North Walsham when possible.

Cllr P Bütikofer stated that as a youth magistrate, he often encountered young offenders that were unaware that being caught with a knife twice carried a mandatory six-month sentence, and asked if anything could be done to improve awareness of the issue. The Superintendent replied that Officers were currently visiting all schools to educate children on the perils of knife crime and would make sure that this was noted.

The Chairman raised an issue regarding marine crime, and asked what more could be done to help tackle this issue. The Superintendent informed the Committee that a new boat would soon be procured that would greatly improve capabilities for tackling offshore crime. The Chairman then raised the issue of speeding and stated that he understood that many were receptive to the idea of a blanket 40mph speed limit north of the A148. The PCC informed the Chairman that the police did not set speed limits, however the Superintendent stated that he would communicate the message to the Highways Agency, and look at the possibility of community speed watch groups issuing fines. The PCC then informed Members that the Safety Camera Partnership's aim was to use speeding fine revenues to fund road safety initiatives, and there had been a recent investment in smaller speed-camera vans to cover the more rural areas of the county. He then added that tram line and KSI data was used to determine where speed cameras were needed to improve safety. Cllr R Price stated that the Ingham speed-watch team were ready to start and asked where the data they collected would go. The Superintendent replied that Norfolk Constabulary and County Council would

collate this information and use it to inform future operations, but admitted that more could be done with it.

Cllr B Hannah raised the issue of minor road accidents and asked if the police logged these less serious cases. The Superintendent replied that they would be sent to the Traffic Justice Team and logged as a crime.

The Chairman asked whether police bodycams had been successful. The Superintendent replied that they had been extremely successful and had helped to convict people that had assaulted Police Officers.

90. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

As the appointed champion of the Councillor Call for Action, Cllr J Oliver introduced the item and outlined the issue with her original statement 'regarding the serious situation caused for residents living in and around the vicinity of the Primary School in Sheringham by parking issues resulting from school traffic'. She then informed the Committee that the provision had only been used once previously since its introduction in 2007 to bring matters of concern to the Committee. Cllr J Oliver informed Members that she had received a number of emails from residents relating to the issue and read out several of the concerns that included: residents not being able to leave their homes during certain times, parents with pushchairs having to walk in the road with pavements blocked by cars, no access for emergency vehicles, and aggressive behaviour from parents collecting or dropping off their children.

Before hearing from members of the public, the Chairman outlined the options of the Committee so that they could begin to consider how to best resolve the issue. These options included:

1. If the matter is simple, to resolve it forthwith.
2. To request Officers to prepare a report for the next meeting.
3. To request the Member submitting the call for action to provide further evidence or information to a future meeting.
4. To set-up a task and finish group to investigate and report back to the Committee.
5. To make recommendations to the Council or Cabinet as appropriate.
6. To decide to take no further action upon the request, for stated reasons.

Cllr R Shepherd expressed his support for the CCfA, and informed Members that the school was built 37 years ago for 400 pupils, however today there were currently over 580 which had caused a substantial increase in parental traffic. He then suggested some possible solutions that included: creating a turning point in the schools playing field, creating a through road, or setting up a task and finish group to look at the issue in more detail.

Mr Ineke was the first public speaker, his statement was outlined as follows: A resident of the affected area for twenty years, in agreement with the comments made by Cllr J Oliver and Cllr R Shepherd. The speaker stated that he had received verbal abuse from members of the public and felt that the situation was an accident waiting to happen, with parents and children being forced to walk in the road, together with a complete lack of access for emergency vehicles. He then stated that he supported the formation of a task and finish group to review the issue and expressed his willingness to participate in such a group.

Ms Bailey was the second public speaker, her statement was outlined as follows: As a Sheringham local raised in the town, Ms Bailey stated that she had lived in the area in the vicinity of the school since 1993. It was stated that the parking was disgusting and dangerous, and that the school had not helped to alleviate the situation with staff themselves

often parking on the surrounding streets. It was stated that buses caused significant congestion when struggling to get past parked cars to reach the school, and high school children were at risk of being hit by cars as there was inadequate space to walk on the pavement. Finally, she stated that she had also received abuse from members of the public parking in the area, and invited Councillors to visit the site.

Ms Bastow was the third public speaker, her statement was outlined as follows: The speaker lives directly opposite the Primary School sought to reiterate all previous points made about the dangers that the parking has caused. She stated that she had windows broken and litter thrown onto her property. In addition, she stated that her children had received abuse at school, as well as receiving verbal abuse herself. Finally, it was stated that she was often unable to access her own property and that she had to carefully time when she could leave her property.

The Chairman invited the first public speaker, Mr Ineke to make a final statement. The speaker replied that he had spoken to the school's Headmaster and all relevant authorities and had not managed to achieve anything.

Questions and Discussion

Cllr S Bütikofer was given the opportunity to respond to the statements, and stated that she completely understood the frustrations felt by local residents and welcomed the opportunity to visit the site herself. She added that since hearing about the issue, she had written to the school, local police and Highways Agency herself to see if anything could be done to help resolve the matter. She then stated that the issue was likely a Highways concern, but stated that she would ensure that the District Council did not ignore the problem.

At the request of the Chairman, the Head of Legal Services confirmed that it would be possible for the Committee to form a task and finish group, with members of the public able to attend to observe and give evidence, but they could not be voting members of the group.

Cllr B Hannah stated that all would sympathise with this issue, then informed the Committee that numerous schemes had already been tried, and whilst he felt that it was a County Council issue, he hoped that NNDC could do something to help. He stated that there were potential solutions, such as opening up the grass area to create a through road to Childs Way, but warned that these could cost a considerable amount of money. Cllr B Hannah then stated that with Cllr J Oliver being a County Councillor and Vice Chair of the Children's Services Committee, he was unsure why she had not taken the issue to NCC, but encouraged NNDC to do what it could regardless.

Cllr B Smith stated that the issue was predominant throughout the district, and suggested that it might be possible to address the issue via a scrutiny in a day session. He then suggested that all the relevant authorities could be invited to attend the session, but overall, people must be encouraged to walk their children to school instead of using their cars. Cllr V Gay added that she was horrified to hear of aggressive behaviour, but knew of similar issues taking place at schools in her ward which had since been resolved, but was unsure if the problems had returned. She then suggested that the Council must use its voice to lobby the relevant authorities to take action.

Cllr M Knowles thanked the members of the public for their statements, then stated that this particular issue was horrendous, and supported the formation of a task and finish group to begin to address the issue with representation from other authorities such as the local police and NCC.

The Corporate Director (SB) agreed that the situation was severe and had taken on board the fact that the issue was a district-wide problem. He then noted that the problem occurred across all generations and took on-board the suggestion for a scrutiny in a day session. He expressed that it was unfortunate that the police representatives had just left, as they could have been asked to issue tickets, which might have helped to resolve the problem. It was suggested that Members needed to manage their expectations of what might be achievable, as allowing areas such as the playing field to be opened up for parking could cause other serious issues, and as such a decision should not be taken lightly. The Corporate Director (SB) then stated that whether the issue was addressed in a scrutiny in a day session or a task and finish group, it would ultimately end up as a matter of enforcement. Cllr P Grove-Jones agreed and stated that enforcement was the only way to resolve the issue. Cllr B Hannah added that it was crucial that those affected by the problems report the issues to the police.

Cllr E Seward informed Members that he was on the NCC Planning Committee that dealt with new schools, and noted that most objections were made in reference to parking issues. He added that whilst it was not a policy he was comfortable with, schools were not required to provide parking for staff. It was stated that North Walsham had suffered similar issues in terms of school parking arrangements that had caused aggressive behaviour. Cllr E Seward then stated that any task and finish group must include representatives from the NCC Planning Department, Children's Services and local police.

At the discretion of the Chairman, members of the public were allowed to make a final response to the Committee. It was stated that an immediate solution to the parking issues could be to use the 70 free parking spaces available at the nearby community centre, and that police and traffic wardens had attended the site but no tickets were issued.

The Chairman informed Members that in accordance with the rules of the CCfA, the Committee would have to make a decision from those outlined previously. It was proposed and seconded that the most suitable course for action would be to form a task and finish group to carefully review the issue.

RESOLVED

To set-up a politically balanced Task & Finish Group with input from the Highways Authority, Police and local residents to consider parking issues around schools in the district, using Sheringham Primary School as the basis for a review.

91. RAPID REVIEW OF THE LOCAL PLAN – UPDATE

The Planning Policy Manager introduced the update and stated that the purpose of the process was to scrutinise the high level risks of the Local Plan. He stated that the key messages from the review were to improve the quality of engagement, allow more flexibility on development in the countryside, and to note the Committee's concerns on the announcement of the housing target.

Questions and Discussion

The Planning Policy Manager informed Members that the deadline for a decision on whether to publish the draft plan for consultation before or after next year's election was approaching, with a decision needed by the end of January. Cllr V Gay stated that she felt it was important that the draft Local Plan should not be rushed and the process should be educational. She then asked what was happening with the Cabinet recommendation on conservation areas. The Planning Policy Manager replied that the Major Projects Manager was working on this programme and was scheduled to look at the issue.

The Chairman asked for confirmation of the housing target of 540 dwellings per annum. The Planning Policy Manager replied that the figure would assess need, and that the target would have to take other figures into account such as the number of second homes in the district and the number of people in care homes, for which three beds counted as one dwelling. He added that it was preferable to set a higher target, as it was easier to reduce the target than increase the number of dwellings available should the target increase, but noted that there was a balance to be struck. The Chairman then asked if there was any support for introducing a policy similar to the St Ives Principal to moderate second home ownership in the district. The Planning Policy Manager replied that there could be no planning controls over second home ownership of existing dwellings, and that such a principal would only put controls on new housing stock. As a result, such restrictions would only apply to 10% of homes in the district and would still leave 90% uncontrolled. Moreover, to implement this policy would require the Council to explain to the Planning Inspector why the policy had been introduced. For these reasons, the Planning Policy Manager explained to the Committee that the Planning Policy and Build Heritage Working Party had been ambivalent to such a policy. Cllr V Gay asked what reason St Ives had given to persuade the Planning Inspector of the need for such a policy. The Planning Policy Manager stated that he was not fully aware of the reasons given, but stated that it was his understanding that the reasons were based on subjective evidence of the impact of second homes in the area.

Cllr P Bütikofer suggested that many affordable homes were being bought by property investors and asked if anything could be done to limit this. The Planning Policy Manager informed the Committee that this was not possible with genuine affordable homes, but had been the case with less expensive homes on the housing market, in which case the market was being distorted by buy-to-let purchases that raised rents above the cost of mortgages. He then stated that unfortunately, planning policy was not the correct tool to address this issue, and whilst it was less of a problem than second homes, the Council must continue to ensure that affordable housing is sold to those in need.

92. MANAGING PERFORMANCE QUARTER 2 – 2018/19

As the relevant portfolio holder, Cllr E Seward was in attendance to answer any questions on the Report.

Questions and Discussion

Cllr V Gay asked how the tourism figures for the district were measured. The Policy and Performance Management Officer replied that she would send the full report that the data was taken from to Members. Cllr M Knowles stated that he agreed with the request and was also curious about how the figures were calculated, as he suggested that holiday homes such as static caravans might affect them. Cllr P Grove-Jones stated that she was interested to know why day visitors did not spend as much as overnight visitors, but noted that overall it was only necessary to know the economic health of the district. Cllr M Knowles agreed and suggested that the general trend was important as opposed to specific figures. The Chairman requested that Visit North Norfolk were invited to update the Committee in the new year.

Cllr P Bütikofer asked how the reduction in empty homes included in the report had been achieved. The Policy and Performance Management Officer stated that the enforcement board had applied all means available to bring properties back into use. Cllr P Grove-Jones added that the Development Committee received a quarterly report on this issue, and stated that CPOs were being used more often. The Chairman asked who would be the new portfolio holder for housing, and was informed that it would be Cllr K Ward.

RESOLVED

The note the Report.

93. TREASURY MANAGEMENT HALF YEARLY REPORT 2018/19

As the relevant portfolio holder, Cllr E Seward was in attendance to answer any questions on the Report.

Questions and Discussion

There were no questions on the content of the report.

RESOLVED

To note the report.

94. MARKET TOWNS INITIATIVE WORKING GROUP

The Chair of the MTI Working Group gave a brief update and noted that whilst the first round of funding had been awarded, a substantial amount remained in three of the towns, which would remain ring fenced for the second round of funding. Cllr P Grove-Jones and Cllr V Gay thanked the Chair of the Working Group and the Democratic Services and Governance Officer for sending the MTI report to Committee Members prior to Cabinet.

95. THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services and Governance Officer gave a summary of the upcoming items on the Cabinet Work Programme.

96. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

The Democratic Services and Governance Officer updated the Committee on items on the agenda in January. It was agreed that the Recycling Rapid Review would be deferred until a new Committee Chair was appointed following the Council's recent change in administration.

The Democratic Services and Governance Officer then reminded Members that Draft Budget Scrutiny Training would take place at 2.00pm in the Committee Room.

The meeting ended at 12.37pm

Chairman