

Housing Sub Committee

Monday, 24 January 2022

Present: Councillor A Newman (Chair)
Councillors L Darke, M Thirlaway, J Walker, K Barrie,
M Green, J Mole, S Phillips and Westwater

Apologies: Councillors John Hunter and E Parker-Leonard

HO20/22 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitute members reported.

HO21/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations or dispensations reported.

HO22/22 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

HO23/22 Update from the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Northumbria, Kim McGuinness, was in attendance to provide the sub-committee with an update on the work of the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The remit of Housing sub-committee included the consideration of matters relating to crime and disorder. Prior to the meeting, members of the sub-committee had highlighted specific areas of interest for discussion. The identified areas were low level crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse.

The PCC highlighted that women's safety at night and on public transport was a current area where lots of awareness had been raised and change was demanded in relation to women's safety standards. An App had been developed, working with transport providers, councils and other organisations, to report issues of concern relating to safety on public transport. The Safer Transport Northumbria app allowed passengers to anonymously report any activity that made them feel uncomfortable. This could be a poorly lit bus stop or relate to a situation or individual that was making them feel uncomfortable during their journey. The app had been developed in conjunction with various public transport providers.

Members asked if the app was easy to use as some passengers on public transport may not be familiar with using digital services. It was explained that the app was relatively easy to navigate and that some changes had already been made to improve functionality following feedback from users. It was also highlighted that the availability of the app would never replace 999 or 101 calls. It was hoped that the use of the app by those comfortable in using

it may alleviate pressure on the traditional reporting systems, keeping them more available for those not as confident using alternative methods.

The PCC highlighted that parks were another area where safety concerns had been raised. The Safer Parks Northumbria Fund was available to spend on lighting, CCTV and to cut back overgrown bushes in park areas. One of the parks identified for this funding was Richardson Dees in Wallsend. A consultation had started on how to spend this funding.

Anti-social behaviour in the borough was raised and it was noted that it was important to deliver a coordinated response and ensure that residents do not feel they are passed from organisation to organisation on the issue. Local authorities were working with the police and fire service to look at the prevention of and reporting of anti-social behaviour.

The PCC informed members of the sub-committee that a refresh of the police and crime plan would shortly be underway, with a focus on preventing serious violence, cyber crimes and victims. It was acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic had demonstrated that 4-year plans were no longer feasible and that continued dialogue was needed to keep up-to-date with key priorities.

Following the presentation from the PCC, members of the sub-committee were invited to raise any questions or further topics for discussion. An area highlighted was that there was maybe a reluctance to report anti-social behaviour as there was uncertainty as to what outcomes could be achieved. It was noted that data gathered from people reporting incidents was useful to help build a picture of anti-social behaviour in specific areas, and it was highlighted that the police had been asked to look at an online reporting form to enable ease of reporting.

Members raised the issue of a lack of public confidence in the police and asked what could be done to restore this. It was noted that in Northumbria there was a high level of police confidence but that this did not translate when out and about. National policing reports and the performance of the 101 number service were factors in confidence levels. It was also noted that a lack of police presence in some places had an impact on confidence levels. Recruitment within the police was happening but it took 3 years to fully train an officer. Improvements had also been made to the 101 number, with more staff available in the control room.

The sub-committee discussed domestic violence and what could be done to encourage reporting of the issue. It was noted that the reasons for not reporting domestic violence were complex, with not being believed just one of the issues. There was an education campaign being delivered in schools to try and raise awareness of identifying domestic violence. A campaign was also in place which supported families of abuse victims to make contact with charities. It was acknowledged that whilst lots of victims do not report domestic violence they do tell friends or family members, who could access support on their behalf. This support could be gained without the need for a crime reference number.

In relation to tackling anti-social behaviour, the importance of teaching children and raising awareness in order to prevent future anti-social behaviour was raised. It was noted that neighbourhood policing teams were going into schools to deliver lessons in citizenship.

The Chair thanked the PCC for her attendance and for the information delivered to the sub-committee.

It was **agreed** to note the information presented to the sub-committee.