

SCRUTINY PANEL B

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Thursday, 30th January, 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Christian Chapman in the Chair;

Councillors Tony Brewer, Dale Grounds,
Phil Rostance, David Walters and
Caroline Wilkinson.

Apology for Absence: Councillor Rachel Madden.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Theresa Hodgkinson, Mike Joy,
Simon Scales, Rebecca Whitehead and
Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillor Jason Zadrozny.

SB.10 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

SB.11 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 7th November, 2019, be received and approved as a correct record.

SB.12 Scrutiny Review: Community Protection Officer Service

The Chairman introduced the item to the Panel and welcomed the Council's Director of Place and Communities, Service Manager for Community Safety and Community Protection Team Leader to the meeting.

The Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services advised Members that the review into the Council's Community Protection Service had been added to the Workplan by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2019. The purpose for the evening was for the Panel to determine the objectives for the review and to establish the potential indicators of success for the service including perceptions from both officers and members of the public.

The Service Manager for Community Safety and the Community Protection Team Leader undertook a presentation to give a sense of background to the service including its current structure and workload.

The Panel were shown a diagram of the current Community Safety staffing structure, which included a variety of officers reporting to the ASB and Nuisance Team Manager, the Community Safety and Strategic Partnerships Officer and the Complex Case Team Leader.

The Community Protection Service was originally launched in July 2009 with a service review being undertaken in 2014. A further review during 2016/17 focussed on case management and prevention with the Complex Case team joining the service in March 2017.

The Community Protection Team Leader outlined to the Panel the definitions of anti-social behaviour and its coverage of a wide range of unacceptable behaviour that caused harm to an individual, their community or their local environment.

Examples of anti-social behaviour (which often crossed over into crime related activity) were outlined as follows:-

- Nuisance, rowdy or inconsiderate neighbours
- Vandalism, graffiti and fly posting
- Street drinking
- Environmental damage including littering, dumping of rubbish and abandonment of cars
- Prostitution related activity
- Begging and vagrancy
- Fireworks misuse
- Inconsiderate or inappropriate use of vehicles.

It was acknowledged that successfully tackling anti-social behaviour came about through multi-partner initiatives rather than different agencies working in silo with no effective exchanges of information. Often anti-social behaviour being exhibited by individuals would escalate over time and trying to manage the early triggers (i.e. substance abuse) would often mitigate against any more serious offending in the future and prove more effective in reducing unacceptable behaviours.

The Integrated Hub, situated within the Council offices, had proved to be successful with many different agencies sharing responsibilities to work directly and indirectly to tackle anti-social behaviour and support vulnerable individuals, namely,

- Nottinghamshire Police (Neighbourhoods, Response, CID)
- Change, Grow, Live (Substance Misuse)
- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Community Rehabilitation Company Probation
- Fire & Rescue
- Youth Offending Teams
- Adult and Children's Social Care
- JUNO Women's Aid
- Children's Society
- Catch 22 (a victim support service).

In relation to the Community Protection Service, 10 uniformed officers plus the Team Leader worked 7 days a week on 8am to 10pm shifts. The team used 3 dedicated vehicles, airwave radio (accessing the Police operational channel) and body worn cameras. The Community Protection Officers had some accredited powers and were Police vetted on commencement of their roles.

The Community Protection Team currently provided a varied service seeking to address all forms of public space anti-social behaviour and community safety issues. The service was flexible, responsive and proactive in its approach to the organisation of patrols in and around schools, parks, estates, town centres and hotspot areas.

Types of activity included:

- problem solving issues
- tackling on-street ASB, including using tools and powers
- gathering intelligence and providing evidence and attending court
- making referrals and working with partner agencies
- safeguarding vulnerable members of the public
- community engagement
- supporting events
- dealing with abandoned vehicles
- substance misuse, alcohol related disorders and underage drinking.

The Council were currently using E-cins to record case information but there were identified gaps in the reliability of the system and far too much information was currently being recorded and shared via email. Spreadsheets were also being utilised to record outputs but potential investment in an enhanced system such as 'Whitespace' could future-proof the team's ability to manage their caseload more efficiently.

To conclude the presentation, Members were asked to consider what positive activity and success might look like for the service. Would the Council be better to continue undertaking a wide variety of activities to go the extra mile for Ashfield and its communities, or focus on fewer activities but deliver these services at a more complex level?

Often it was challenging to ensure that the 10 Community Protection Officers adequately serviced the entirety of the Ashfield District and if future decision-making took action to reduce their roles, who would pick up the activities that had been eliminated from their duties?

The Council's latest Corporate Plan objectives continued to target the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour as a priority with a requirement to work with partners to ensure people continued to feel safe within their homes and communities. Members acknowledged and welcomed this continuing stance.

To enable the Panel to set parameters for the review, a debate took place and Members discussed the following:-

- compliments to the current Community Protection Officers and the recently appointed Team Leader for the excellent work they continually undertake to protect Ashfield and its residents;
- the methods utilised for managing officer shift patterns;
- the current difficulties in providing accurate data for monitoring performance of the service due to the breadth of activities being undertaken by officers and the disparity between actual and perceived duties for the role;
- the categories of data that the Council and Members might request to enable analysis of the service and its perceived levels of success;
- the importance of exploring the possibility of procuring the 'Whitespace' system to enhance case management and recording;
- a typical working week for a Community Protection Officer;
- the importance of allowing Community Protection Officers to adapt to their changing workloads and utilise their local knowledge, to allow for appropriate responses to emerging situations/emergencies;
- the current working relationship (and information sharing) between the Police and the Community Protection team and its ability to ensure the correct response is given to differing levels of crime;
- the public's perception of the Community Protection Officer role and their impact on safety within local communities;
- the benefits of talking to a Community Protection Officer as part of the review process to ascertain their perspective on the current duties that they undertake;
- the benefits of the use of body worn cameras and their contribution towards evidence gathering.

Following the discussion, the Scrutiny Research Officer suggested that the Panel could consider undertaking some form of public consultation as part of the review to ascertain resident's views/perceptions in relation to the service. This consultation could be facilitated across all media platforms but caution would need to be exercised that the questions posed were targeted appropriately to ensure the capture of pertinent information to inform the review.

To conclude, the Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services thanked all present at the meeting for their contribution to the discussions and took the Panel through the proposed terms of reference for the review.

RESOLVED

that the terms of reference for the 'Community Protection Officer Service' review be agreed as follows:-

Review Objectives

The objectives of the review will be to:

- Gain an understanding of the current Community Protection Service, and how it operates within the wider Community Safety section;
- Establish the objectives and priorities of the service;
- Examine outcomes and achievements;
- Review procedures and systems in place to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the service;
- Understand public, partners and stakeholder expectations of the service;

Indicators of Success

- Establishing clear service objectives that are fit for purpose;
- Identifying effective mechanisms to monitor performance and outcomes;
- Clear evidence of effective collaborative working within the Integrated Services Hub;
- Understanding public expectations and current perspectives of the service;
- Ensuring the service provides value for money;
- Ensuring adequate resources are in place for the service to operate and communicate efficiently;

Methodology

The review to be carried out through consideration of both qualitative and quantitative research:

- Interviewing Community Protection Officers, Police representatives and Council Officers;
- Public consultation;
- Analysis of statistical information regarding the service;
- Consultation with partner agencies;
- Best practice from other authorities, systems used, powers given etc;
- Facilitation of informal working groups with Members, officers and expert witnesses as required;

Review Involvement

To seek involvement from the following representatives over the course of the review:

- Director – Place and Communities;
- Service Manager – Community Safety;
- Community Protection Team Leader;
- Community Protection Officers;
- Representatives from partner agencies and stakeholders.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Chairman.