

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was held on Wednesday 6 March 2024.

PRESENT: Councillors M Storey (Chair), J Kabuye (Vice-Chair), J Banks, I Blades, E Clynch, M McClintock, J Young and D Branson (Substitute for J Ewan)

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors J Thompson

OFFICERS: G Field and S Bonner

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors S Dean, J Ewan, J Platt, J Ryles, M Smiles and J Walker

23/72 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

23/73 **EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chief Executive submitted a report which identified the forthcoming issues to be considered by the Executive, as outlined in Appendix A to the report. The report provided the Overview and Scrutiny Board with the opportunity to consider whether any item contained within the Executive Forward Work Programme should be considered by the Board or referred to a scrutiny panel.

NOTED

23/74 **EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE - COMMUNITY SAFETY**

The Chair welcomed the Executive Member for Community Safety and the Director of Environment and Community Services to the meeting and asked the Executive Member to deliver her presentation.

The Community Safety portfolio covered areas including Community Safety, Cohesion and Migration, Hubs and Libraries and Locality Working. The Board's attention was drawn to Neighbourhood Safety Wardens who would eventually number 30 in total and would operate across the town. Their work included supporting vulnerable people on a range of issues including debt management, victims of crime as well as undertaking welfare visits. All Neighbourhood Safety Officers were trained in First Aid and could administer CPR.

With regards to Neighbourhood Safety Officers, their roles included investigation of nuisance complaints, anti-social behaviour and hate crime. They also attended daily Police briefings and helped with the reduction of crime and the fear of crime. They were also responsible for tackling persistent begging.

The service also had Environmental Neighbourhood Safety Wardens whose role was to investigate and enforce fly tipping offences, coordinate community skip drives and deal with abandoned vehicles. Those officers were based at the Bus Station and were in possession of CCTV equipment that could be deployed rapidly.

In terms of Community Safety, this was driven by Active Intelligence Mapping which collected data from several sources including Thirteen Housing Group, the Council's OneStop system, the Fire Brigade and the Police. Emphasis was placed on those areas that had the highest levels of criminal activity. The Community Safety Partnership was a statutory function which helped inform the safer streets initiative.

Community Safety also included PREVENT whose objective was to safeguard people at risk of radicalisation. The Neighbourhood Action Partnerships were in the North, South, East, and West of the town with all councillors welcome to attend and provide input. The Executive Member expressed disappointment in the low attendance of the Neighbourhood Partnership

meetings which would be mentioned in her next report to Council. Community Safety was also able to bid for, and was the recipient of, funding from sources such as Safer Streets and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Community Cohesion was also part of the Executive Member's portfolio. This function included a range of services which included community engagement through conversations to measure levels of cohesion, the successful redevelopment of the Interfaith Network and weekly coffee mornings for Eastern European communities. There had been over 28 newly granted refugees that had sustained meaningful employment with many taking part in volunteer opportunities.

Support had been provided to all Ukraine visas to ensure greater integration and cohesion with several Ukrainian refugees having found employment in local businesses and schools. In terms of Afghan resettlement there had been full support for 20 families, which included property allocation, education, clothing and furniture.

There were 10 community hubs and libraries across the town with two self-service libraries and a Books on Wheels delivery service.

The Executive Member invited questions from the Board.

A Member queried what the process was to supply mobile CCTV as they had been waiting for approximately two years. It was clarified that CCTV was placed in areas with the highest crime activity. There was a finite amount of CCTV equipment and that certain legal thresholds had to be met for them to be installed.

It was asked how Neighbourhood working would affect the Executive Member's capacity. It was clarified that Neighbourhood working would change how the Council operated to make services more local and this should start to happen in April 2024. As part of this Council officers would work with other agencies to ensure services were as close to communities as possible.

A Member commented that, in terms of pavement parking and legislation introducing £100 fines, this may create a problem of blocked roads which would cause issues for elderly residents. It could also create problems in terms of enforcement. There was a need to approach pavement parking sensibly.

It was also queried if provision for a community hub or neighbourhood working could be present in more parts at the southern part of the town. While Hemlington was the current hub site for the south of the town, budgetary constraints would not allow each area of the town to have a community hub.

A Member queried how community cohesion was measured. There had always been measures about how residents felt about where they lived. There were several activities that allowed the Council to gauge community cohesion including engagement activities such as coffee mornings with different groups. Any actions taken in the community would depend on community need. If help was not available from the council residents would be signposted to the most appropriate service. It was also commented community cohesion was a two-way approach, namely that different communities needed to understand what social norms were in Middlesbrough, for example.

It was also stated that the work of the Community Safety team was not solely about international new arrivals it worked with all communities.

A Member queried attendance levels at the Neighbourhood Action Partnerships and what could be done to increase them. It was clarified this issue was described in the Executive Member's report to Council on 8 March. Further communications would be sent to all Members about the Neighbourhood Action Partnerships. It was important that should Members experience issues in their area they should bring it up at their local Neighbourhood Action Partnership meeting. For those who had already done this it had proven quite productive.

It was asked if Community Safety Officers wore uniforms. Some did, such as enforcement officers but others did not. It was asked if those officers were reflective of the communities they served. This was not currently the case and there was a need to understand why people did not want to join the Council from different backgrounds.

The Chair raised the issue of stray dogs as he had received lots of queries and wondered if, since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, this had created extra pressure on the service. It was confirmed that this had created extra pressures on the service and other providers, such as dog's homes. A report was being created for Executive consideration about this matter due to the increased pressure on services. It was also stated the issue had become more acute since the introduction of the ban on the XL bully breed as some dog's homes could not home them.

The Chair also commented that the work of the community safety team was greatly appreciated, and thanks were expressed for their continued efforts.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Community Safety and the Director for Environment and Community Services for their attendance.

ORDERED that:

1. The presentation be circulated to OSB.
2. The information presented be noted.

23/75

SCRUTINY CHAIRS UPDATE

The Chair invited scrutiny panel chairs to provide their updates.

The Chair of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel advised the Panel had not met since OSB's last meeting. However, permission was sought from OSB to receive information about the future of the Captain Cook Birthplace museum. The Chair of OSB agreed this would be a useful exercise.

The Chair of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel advised the Panel had not met since OSB last met and would next meet on 11 March.

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel advised the Panel had not since OSB last met and its next meeting would be on 19 March.

The Vice Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Panel advised the Panel had met on 4 March and received information relating to the Community Safety Partnership. During the meeting questions were raised around statistics indicating Anti-Social Behaviour rates were decreasing while violent crime rates were going up. It was also stated a report into crustacean deaths was being prepared for submission to Council the conclusions of which did not agree with those of DEFRA. A previous meeting of the Panel also heard an update regarding Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act and had recommended that, during the next policy review, investigations carried out internally should be approved by the Chief Executive rather than the Head of HR. It was confirmed this recommendation had already been communicated to the relevant service area.

The Chair agreed this should be submitted to Executive for their information.

ORDERED that:

1. The Regeneration Scrutiny Panel received information relating to the future of the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum.
2. That the Environment Scrutiny Panel's recommendation that internal investigations be authorised by the Chief Executive be placed on a future Executive meeting for their information.
3. The information presented be noted.

23/76

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.

None.