

Housing Sub-Committee

25 March 2019

Present: Councillor A Newman (Chair)
Councillors K Bolger, L Darke, John Hunter, J
Kirwin, P Oliver, J O'Shea, A Percy, M
Thirlaway and J Walker

In attendance:

CLr Carole Burdis – Cabinet Member for
Community Safety and Engagement

HO28/03/19 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Mason, S Phillips and M Reynolds.

HO29/03/19 Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's constitution the following substitute member was appointed:

Councillor J O'Shea for Councillor S Phillips

HO30/03/19 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest reported.

HO31/03/19 Minutes

It was **agreed** that the minutes of the meetings held on 28 January 2019 and 11 February 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

HO32/03/19 Community Safety Strategy

The sub-committee received a report which provided Members with an update on the work of the Safer North Tyneside Partnership, in particular the Safer North Tyneside Strategy. The report focused on two key issues: an update on the current Strategy which expired on 31st March 2019 and the new strategy due to begin on 1 April 2019. Members were invited to note the contents of the report and agree to receive an annual report on the delivery of the work plan.

Members were informed that it was a statutory requirement for Community Safety Partnerships to prepare an annual strategic assessment of crime and disorder activities and for this assessment to shape how the Partnership responds to emerging issues. This process informed the Community Safety Strategy. The current strategy covered the period April 2014 to 31 March 2019. The actions set out in the five year plan were achieved with many of the items continually being delivered over the course of the five year strategy lifespan. Successes for the work Partnership included: supporting the introduction of a new Victim Support Scheme by the Police and Crime Commissioner; setting up a Hate Crime task and finish group; coordinated and facilitated two Project Argus counter terrorism events for local businesses; and introduced the Volunteer Flood Warden Scheme.

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Throughout the delivery of the 2014-19 Strategy, there were some significant developments in the Community Safety landscape. Some themes that emerged were substantial cross cutting work areas, such as Child Sexual Exploitation, Modern Day Slavery and an increase in crime and disorder. The Safer North Tyneside Partnership Board (the Board) agreed a more flexible approach was needed to encompass more of these emerging issues and to help the Partnership take a wider view of community safety issues. The Community Safety Strategy 2019-2024 had been developed with the multi-agency Board. The Strategy had links to the Police and Crime Plan, developed by the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Partnership had identified four key priorities in setting the Strategy: Safeguarding, Public Protection, Alcohol and Drugs and Crime and Disorder. For each priority identified, the Partnership had considered what current service provision existed, current data sets and intelligence available, along with existing resource levels and awareness/communication strategies. This information would help shape the annual work plan and identify what actions needed to be taken to support the delivery of the Strategy. By developing a work plan on an annual basis, the Board would be able to refresh information about emerging themes and trends to ensure that all the good work of the Partnership was captured. It was noted that performance would be reported quarterly to the Board, with an annual report on progress against the work plan being presented to Cabinet. An annual report would also be provided to Housing sub-committee, in its role in scrutinising community safety matters.

The sub-committee had been informed that North Tyneside continued to be one of the safest metropolitan boroughs in the country. Members indicated that they would like to see some supporting statistical evidence in order to back this up and for the public to be able to see this information. Officers undertook to provide some relevant statistics to Members. A member of the sub-committee commented on the consultation that took place as part of the process for setting the strategy and highlighted that those consulted were part of formal groups and that it was disenfranchised and vulnerable groups that needed to be engaged. It was noted that there was also a wider public consultation available online and with hard copies available in libraries/customer service centres. This resulted in 47 responses which, in line with the Council's engagement strategy, were seen as sufficient public consultation. The officers stated that they would take on board the comments that more youth groups and community groups needed to be engaged.

Members highlighted that, when dealing with instances of low level anti-social behaviour, there were reoccurring issues reported by residents in relation to engagement and communication. It was recognised that this could cause frustration but that sometimes there would be issues with confidentiality that would limited the information that could be provided to individuals. It was also noted that the Council had a new senior manager for communications and work to improve the customer journey was ongoing.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their presentation of the report.

It was **agreed** to 1) note the report and 2) receive an annual update on the delivery of the work plan.

HO33/03/19 Domestic Abuse Policy

The sub-committee received a report on the proposed Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy and the rationale for its implementation. The sub-committee was consulted on the content of the policy and was recommended to support the implementation of the 'stand alone' Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy. A copy of the draft strategy was

appended to the report.

Housing Services current Domestic Abuse Policy was part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. The aim was to achieve accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in the autumn of 2019. One of the DAHA's national service standards related to policies and procedures and required housing organisations to create a 'stand alone' Domestic Abuse Policy. It was explained that the DAHA was a partnership between three agencies: Standing Together; Peabody; and Gentoo.

In March 2016 the Government had published the new 'Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy'. The strategy committed to ongoing reductions in the prevalence of domestic abuse by:

- Breaking the intergenerational cycle of abuse
- Giving greater attention to the risk of becoming a perpetrator
- Challenging attitudes and beliefs about abuse
- Improving awareness among children and young people about healthy relationships

On a regional level, three Domestic and Sexual Violence Champions Networks operated in Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. These networks were supported by a steering group comprised of the Domestic and Sexual Violence leads in each of the areas, and other relevant partners from both the statutory and voluntary sector. The aim of the champions network was to improve community and organisations response to domestic and sexual violence.

The North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Partnership co-ordinated strategy and resources to afford protection, provision and prevention to people exposed to domestic abuse in North Tyneside. There was an action plan with 4 priorities: preventions, provision, partnership working and risk reduction. The Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy set out how North Tyneside Council's housing service will assist and support any person experiencing or threatened with domestic abuse. The policy aimed to ensure that customers should not live in fear of violence, abuse or harassment from a partner, former partner, or any member of their family.

Members were informed that the aims of the policy included to raise awareness of domestic abuse; ensure that employees of North Tyneside Council understood the role they could play in tackling domestic abuse and to develop a consistent approach across the borough; to support victims to take appropriate legal measures to protect themselves and their families; to make appropriate safeguarding referrals if it was believed a child, or a vulnerable adult, was at risk due to an abusive relationship; and support victims to make decisions around their housing needs, whether they wish to remain in their home or move to a new home.

A member of the sub-committee referred to the process for accessing Universal Credit, in that it was paid to one person within the household. It was asked how the services and support for victims would be promoted and what support would be available for people needing to reapply for Universal Credit. It was noted that officers were trying to get the message out that people could approach the housing team for help, regardless of whether they were a Council tenant. The support offered would be tailored to meet the individual circumstances of the case and what action the victim wanted to take. Assistance would be provided in accessing temporary accommodation and the authority worked closely with Harbour to achieve this. It was recognised that there were difficulties surrounding Universal Credit and that it could be a barrier to people leaving relationships. It was noted that the authority worked closely with the Department for Working Pensions to try and raise

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awareness and that it was hoped Universal Credit officers could be employed in the future, whose role would include helping those suffering domestic abuse.

Members thanked the officer for the presentation and supported the policy and steps to get accreditation. It was highlighted that the draft policy did not contain any reference to female genital mutilation and the support that would be offered to those reporting instances. It was agreed to look at this area when further drafting of the policy was undertaken.

It was **agreed** to note report and support the contents of the draft policy.