



MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Strong and Resilient Communities Workstream - Available on https://barnsley.public-i.tv
DATE:	Tuesday, 21 July 2020
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Carr, Fielding, Higginbottom, W. Johnson, Leech, Phillips, Wilson, Wraith MBE, Smith, Tattersall, Lodge and Hayward together with co-opted member Ms. G Carter

11 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies for absence were received in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

12 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Tattersall declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute 14 in relation to her position on Berneslai Homes Board.

Councillor Lodge declared a pecuniary interest in minute 14 in so far as discussion related to his employment for an organisation that delivers support accommodation across the borough.

13 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th July were received and noted.

14 Community Safety in Barnsley and the Impact of COVID-19

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting: -

Councillor Jenny Platts – Cabinet Spokesperson, Adults and Communities;
 Wendy Lowder – Executive Director, Adults and Communities;
 Paul Brannan – Head of Safer Barnsley
 Chief Superintendent Sarah Poolman – South Yorkshire Police.

Members were reminded of the importance of supporting communities to be safe, and for people to feel safe. It was acknowledged that everyone had a part to play to ensure this. Members heard how Barnsley was in a positive place with much work already undertaken. Community safety services were organised on a neighbourhood level, working in partnership to maximise the impact of resources.

Members heard of the work of the Safer Barnsley Partnership, which focused around the four key delivery groups: - Tackling Crime; Protecting Vulnerable People; Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour; and Promoting Community Tolerance and Respect.

It was acknowledged that since lockdown the services involved in delivering community safety had been collectively challenged, dealing with an unprecedented and unforeseen set of circumstances. This not only impacted on how services were delivered, but also the expectations of people in relation to behaviour and levels of tolerance.

In relation to recorded crime, within lockdown this reduced to approximately 40% of previously seen levels. It was acknowledged that figures would not have included hidden or unreported crimes. However, recorded crime had increased as restrictions begin to ease.

A significant focus had been on tailoring approaches to those who may be at risk behind closed doors, such as from domestic abuse. Targeted campaigns had helped to increase awareness about access to support. Despite this reporting had reduced.

Antisocial behaviour (ASB) had seen a 20-30% increase during the lockdown period and this was attributed to a number of reasons including changes to regulations relating to covid-19 and therefore what residents would regard as acceptable behaviour.

Patterns relating to ASB had also changed with incidences reducing in the town centre but increasing out in wards during lockdown. Environmental crime, such as fly tipping increased during the lockdown period, which may have been attributed to people being at home more, together with a reduced offer in relation to waste management.

Relationships between residents often altered during lockdown and Members heard how significant work had been undertaken to monitor the types of complaints received, with these often relating to breaching regulations such as residents having guests to their homes. With many residents being at home, there remains challenges around neighbourhood disputes.

Members heard that the Police had responded proactively, engaging, explaining and encouraging, and only moving to enforcement when absolutely necessary. There remained challenges in relation to managing the expectations of some who would like to see more enforcement. In relation to Berneslai Homes properties, it was noted that some services had been withdrawn by the provider, and a corresponding impact had been seen. However, this was due to be reinstated.

In comparison to other areas in South Yorkshire it was noted that Barnsley compared favourably with ASB rates significantly lower than neighbouring areas. Although this was now increasing, Barnsley remained in a relatively strong position.

Members were assured that services were aware of the challenges going forward, and responses would take these into account going forward.

Questions were invited from Members and in the ensuing discussion and challenge, the following points were raised: -

Praise was given in relation to recent operations to discourage motorbike use on the Trans-Pennine Trail, which had resulted in this problem being reduced. However, speeding in residential areas remained an issue in many wards. It was acknowledged that the Police continued to conduct proactive operations in areas of concern, but this was only one part of a more complex situation which included highway design and speed limits. It was agreed that this situation be discussed in more detail with officers in the Place Directorate and also with the Safer Roads Partnership.

In relation to fly-tipping and environmental crime, the impact of the temporary closure of household waste recycling centres was noted. However, Members were also made aware of the impact of courts not being in session and the corresponding impact of the absence of a deterrent. Members were also made aware of the restrictions in place which meant officers were unable to conduct interviews under caution, which halted the development of cases.

Members raised the issue of ASB, which had been escalated in a number of areas such as in Bank End. This had been reported but remained an issue. It was suggested that this had been exacerbated as individuals migrated from open to more residential spaces. However, issues in open spaces such as within Cudworth Park did remain.

Reassurances were given that the Safer Neighbourhood Service teams were now working more proactively to address issues such as this. Concerns were expressed regarding the level of involvement from Berneslai Homes. Incidences of ASB in Berneslai Homes properties were discussed, and Members felt that some issues may be avoided through Berneslai Homes having a more robust lettings policy. The need for multi-agency approach was acknowledged and it was noted that some Members did have local multi-agency meetings to consider these types of issues and discuss appropriate local responses. Officers acknowledged the importance of Members in providing intelligence and feedback from their communities.

Concerns about the provision of CCTV in certain areas was discussed, and Members heard how CCTV coverage was more extensive than previously, with high streets and principal towns linked to a central control centre. It was noted that CCTV provision had to be provided within the current financial constraints.

Ensuring residents feel safe was discussed, and it was noted that one of the sub-groups of the Safer Barnsley Partnership would be considering feelings and perceptions in light of Covid-19, and how best to improve these. Those present noted the constraints placed on the Police in relation to enforcement of Covid-19, with the ability to enforce eroded as lockdown lifted.

The importance of communications was acknowledged, with a number of Members feeling that the recent information provided on Covid-19 testing was confusing.

Members expressed concerns regarding young people and crime, and questions were raised as to whether young people had been drawn into crime during the

lockdown period. It was suggested that quarter one figures may shed more light on this, but that it was more likely that young people were involved in ASB which had increased.

Challenges were made around how the Safer Barnsley Partnership involved the wider community in establishing priorities. It was noted that extensive consultation was undertaken, with over 1,600 responses received. These were reflected in the published partnership plan.

Members raised concerns in relation to drug dealing and the response from 101 when reporting this. Those present heard that more warrants had been issued in relation to drugs in the past year than the previous three years, but this was an ongoing issue. Members were encouraged to continue to provide intelligence in relation to this issue.

Questions were asked about the rates of suicide and whether there had been an increase over the lockdown period. In response it was highlighted that mental health had been affected due to lockdown, and it was suggested that people were waiting for symptoms to become more acute before seeking help. This issue was due to be considered by the Senior Management Team imminently.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That thanks be given for the attendance and contribution from all the witnesses;
- (ii) That, in relation to the concerns of Members about road safety, the Executive Director, Adults and Communities, on behalf of the Safer Communities Partnership, discusses the issue with the Executive Director, Place, and the Safer Roads Partnership with a view to enabling a multi-agency response in problematic areas where this is possible;
- (iii) That feedback be provided to Communications and Public Health in relation to the need to ensure that communications in relation to Covid-19 testing is easy to understand; and
- (iv) That concerns in relation to the Berneslai Homes and their proactive involvement in addressing issues of ASB, and the robustness of their lettings policy be raised with appropriate officers.

Chair