



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 17th December 2020

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

1st October 2020 at 2.00pm

Present:

Councillor Silvester (in the Chair)

Councillors Beasant, Nichols, Pettigrew, Sheridan, K Swinburn, Watson and Woodward.

Officers in attendance:

- Helen Isaacs (Director for Communities)
- Guy Lonsdale (Deputy Section 151 Officer)
- Carolina Borgstrom (Assistant Director Operations)
- Spencer Hunt (Assistant Director of Safer NEL)
- Zoe Campbell (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Katie Chadwick (Home Options and Development Manager)
- Colin Lomas (Community Service Manager)
- Paul Caswell (Young and Safe Specialist Lead)
- Lisa Logan (Strategic Lead Environment)
- Will Abe (Environmental Enforcement Manager)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Ron Shepherd (Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities)
- Councillor Stewart Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport)
- Chief Inspector Paul French (Humberside Police)
- James Bailey (Humberside Fire and Rescue Service)
- Ros Barber (Humberside Fire and Rescue Service)
- Mary Vickers (Sector Support NEL)

SPC.19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence from this meeting were received for this meeting.

SPC.20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stewart Swinburn and Councillor Shepherd declared a personal interest in SPC.27 as members of the Humberside Fire Authority. Councillor Beasant declared a personal interest in SPC.28 as a Trustee of Harbour Place.

SPC.21 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the special meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 23rd July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

SPC.22 QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

SPC.23 FORWARD PLAN

The panel received the published forward plan and members were invited to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

SPC.24 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Director for Communities tracking the recommendations of the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That Councillors Sheridan and Beasant provide Ms Campbell with details of the specific areas of anti-social behaviour that they would like to focus on at the next panel meeting on the 26th November, 2020.
3. That the panel receive a briefing note on the funding received by the voluntary and community sector, subject to necessary permissions, by email.

SPC.25 QUARTER 1 FINANCE MONITORING 2020/21

The panel received a report from the Director of Resources and Governance providing key information and analysis of the Council's position and performance at the end of quarter one of the 2020/21 financial year

Mr Lonsdale explained there was a £1.7m overspend and that was after the additional funding received from Government of £11.2m. He confirmed that Covid-19 had a big impact on spending activity across the Council but specifically around social care and demand pressures as a result.

Mr Lonsdale highlighted the loss in fees and charges income due to Covid-19 and, in particular, car park charges. He confirmed that the government had announced a compensation scheme for fees and charges so the Council was able to reclaim the lost income that it would have received against the budget position which would bring down the overspend and that would be reflected in the quarter two report.

On a positive note, Mr Lonsdale confirmed that the capital programme had progressed, especially around infrastructure.

Going into the budget setting process over the coming months, Mr Lonsdale highlighted the importance of all scrutiny panels being briefed on the uncertainty around government funding and the Council's future budget position, with the effects of Covid-19 being carried forward into next year and thereafter. He confirmed there was a major risk to the collection of council tax and business rates going forward. Local authorities were pressing the government for additional support around health and social care in the local government settlement in December 2020.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.26 HUMBERSIDE POLICE CRIME STATISTICS

The panel received a presentation from Chief Inspector Paul French that outlined the latest crime statistics from Humberside Police.

Recorded crime figures to date showed a reduction in overall crime. However, there was an increase in drug related crime, which included drugs found on the person following a search. He explained the increase in miscellaneous crimes in society covered a wide range of crimes such as threats to cause damage to property and threats over social media. He gave reassurance that, although the sexual offence rate had increased, the police had done a lot of work to understand the increase and it was noted that historic offences were being reported at the same time as current offences. He felt that it was positive that people felt confident in reporting these offences. There was also an increase in domestic violence during Covid-19 and there were several initiatives going on to support agencies and partners to reduce these incidents occurring.

Chief Inspector French talked through the initiatives to reduce crime across the borough which included, Operation Scoria that focused on

violent crime and drug dealing and resulted in a number of properties being closed down.

Within the night-time economy, the introduction of street marshals and increased police support on the ground reinforcing social distancing rules had had a positive impact. Operation Galaxy had a relentless approach to tackling drug criminals. In partnership with the local authority, Operation Bombardier had supported vulnerable adults within the communities who were being targeted by criminals. Activity to tackle County Lines was also undertaken in a week of intensified action focusing on hotels and transport. As part of Operation Gallant, crime prevention advice was given to properties in close proximity to where a shed or garage had recently been targeted by criminals to raise resident's awareness.

Overall anti-social behaviour between July and August 2020 reduced in the Grimsby West wards but increased in the Grimsby East wards. Chief Inspector French explained that 23% of anti-social behaviour (ASB) was motorcycle related, particularly in the South, Freshney and Immingham wards. Operation Yellowfin had brought in support from officers from other areas to assist in targeting those people who were known to use bikes in an anti-social way. As a result, there was a reduction in the ASB by 12%.

Chief Inspector French gave an overview of activity during the lockdown and explained that action was taken against 29 individuals in North East Lincolnshire breaking Covid regulations between April and September 2020. This was compared to Hull with 64, East Riding with 32 and North Lincolnshire with 27.

Humberside Police continued to utilise '*Humber Talk*' to feedback to local communities and provide reassurance that concerns were being listened to and acted upon.

Members raised concerns about social media and potential crimes occurring and felt there needed to be more online safety awareness amongst children and young people in schools around the dangers of social media. Chief Inspector French informed the panel that Humberside Police were working with the Breck Foundation who supported young people and provided awareness raising materials for parents around the dangers of social media. He confirmed there was a designated police officer to work in schools to share the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) guidance.

Mr Caswell confirmed the CEOP work was ongoing in schools and was fundamental to help young people keep themselves safe and that internet safety was going to be a mandatory part of the curriculum and part of the Ofsted Inspection going forward. This was welcomed by members of the panel and they requested an update at a future meeting on the work that was going on in schools around online safety.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a report providing an update on the work going on in schools around online safety be submitted to a future meeting of this panel.

SPC.27 HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE CONSULTATION

The panel received a presentation from Humberside Fire and Rescue on the consultation that was taking place on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IMP) that had been developed. The plan was a mandatory requirement for all fire and rescue authorities that set out the risks across the service area for a three year period and then reviewed annually.

Mr Bailey explained that it was key to receive feedback from the communities on the IMP and feed their suggestions and considerations into plan. It also gave Humberside Fire and Rescue the opportunity to explain the work they did in conjunction with partners.

The second part was to look at the strategic plan for the organisation which explained its aims and objectives. It also set out how risk was assessed and how they planned to keep communities, businesses and those who visited the Humber region safe. Mr Bailey was interested to find out views from the communities about their fire and rescue services and the direction they were planning.

Ms Barber gave an overview of the questions in the survey and explained the reason behind them. Ms Issacs queried if the consultation referred to some of the community activity that the fire and rescue service had been involved in and was there an intention to have a differentiated approach across the Humber that would reflect the different needs from the different communities. Mr Bailey explained that they used data led intelligence to help inform public safety activities including the 'safe and well' checks in residents houses which included a home fire safety check along with providing advice on health related matters where needed, which was done in a targeted way. There was an online referral system for individuals and partners that tailored the engagement carried out in line with communities or individual needs or requirements. There were local operational teams that worked with agencies in specific areas, including schools and other establishments, to raise awareness of fire setting behaviours and undertake targeted intervention where necessary. He confirmed that standards in terms of accident and emergencies were the same across the Humber. Ms Barber confirmed that an information holding area for the consultation provided on the website linked to the full documents and information.

The panel were invited to take part in the online consultation that closed on 11th November 2020 and promote this across their wards.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

SPC.28 ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

The panel received the Rough Sleeping Strategy and an update on the work with rough sleepers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ms Chadwick explained the Council's response to the homelessness prevention service (HPS) during the Covid national lockdown. She confirmed that on 27th March 2020 the Government tasked all local authorities to bring 'everybody in' in the hope that very few people would be street homeless throughout the pandemic. As a result, the Council secured a local hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation to protect as many people as possible. Accommodation was provided for 120 people between March and September 2020 and since March, 24 people moved into self-contained units that were refurbished as crisis units. She highlighted the excellent partnership working between Harbour Place, Hull and East Yorkshire Mind and HPS to ensure that the authority's statutory duties were being adhered to. The Temporary Accommodation Team accompanied other support professionals to appointments. A housing and health needs assessment had been completed for all rough sleepers accommodated.

Ms Chadwick confirmed that the teams continued to provide temporary accommodation for those who had approached the service under the statutory homelessness duties, in which there were a total of 44 households in temporary accommodation.

Ms Chadwick talked about the rapid rehousing pathway that was funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of the rough sleeper initiative and housing first. As a result there were two, two bedroom empty homes purchased and refurbished by YMCA in conjunction with the Council to provide move-on accommodation and, as a result, four former rough sleepers were housed there.

The Chair explained that the homelessness working group found that one of the biggest reasons for homelessness was debt and he queried if anything had been done to remove that barrier. Ms Chadwick confirmed the Chartered Institute of Housing produced a document called 'rethinking allocations' that looked at, if the process stopped people being accommodated, how housing registers worked and if there were enough people involved in the decision rather than a computer giving the response. She confirmed that out of that came discussions with Lincolnshire Housing Partnership, Longhurst Group and Sanctuary Housing to look at how the Council could access accommodation for those people with historic debt. Those with debts could be housed on a temporary basis that could become permanent in the long-term.

Members were concerned that the Post Office were no longer letting homeless people open a bank account for their benefits to be paid into and they were finding it difficult to set up bank accounts elsewhere.

Members asked what provision was in place to assist with this. Ms Chadwick reassured members that the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) provided a letter that could fast track people getting bank accounts. There were housing assistants to help with the process and credit union jam jar accounts were available.

Members queried if there were more homeless people out there that were not identified. Ms Chadwick confirmed it was an accurate figure but the worry was that there were a number of people who sofa-surfed that could eventually be homeless because the top reason people cited for being made homeless was that they had fallen out with family and friends.

The reduction in single room accommodation was referred to by members and they questioned if social housing providers were on board to purchase/build this type of accommodation. Ms Chadwick explained that there was a need for one-bedroom accommodation. The difficulty with new builds was that they were bigger units and she confirmed that it was still a challenge.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

SPC.29 COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN QUARTERLY

The panel considered the quarterly report providing an update on the Covid-19 Recovery Plan.

Ms Isaacs explained the focus had shifted from lockdown to test and trace and now winter planning. There was daily contact with schools to try to manage outbreaks and Public Health were providing support and guidance. Work was continuing with the Department for Education Ofsted inspection improvement work and bringing health services back into operation, especially in primary care.

There continued to be daily contact through link workers in adult social care and residential care settings to monitor concerns around personal protective equipment and infection control.

Supporting businesses was a focus since the latest restrictions were announced. Work continued with partners to keep businesses well informed and there was a good level of compliance locally. Ms Isaacs confirmed the Covid-19 stewards had been well received by the business sector.

Community resilience work was ongoing and there was work taking place in case shielding was placed-introduced. A leaflet had been issued on financial advice and wellbeing, signposting people to where they could get help. This followed the all-household newsletter in the summer, which had been well received and a further all-household newsletter was being worked on.

Ms Isaacs referred the health and well-being peer review where feedback was positive on the approach the Council was taking across the borough with our Covid-19 planning and response and control arrangements to date. The biggest challenge was to counter any complacency in the community and keep the positive and supportive messages going.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.30 FOOD BANK FORUM

The panel heard about the work undertaken by the Food Bank Forum.

Ms Isaacs introduced Mary Vickers who was the Community Food Co-ordinator for North East Lincolnshire. Ms Vickers explained that her role was to coordinate and work with the different food bank providers across the borough, encourage them to work together with the aim to reduce the reliance on food parcel and free meals and work creatively with communities to build resilience where food was concerned.

There were two main food providers and they saw a large increase in the numbers of food parcels required which in the long term was not sustainable. A lot of effort had been put into helping residents in terms of communication about supermarket delivery slots and getting support mechanisms in place so they did not have to rely on the food banks.

Ms Isaacs referred to the emergency food hub the Council had set up to issue emergency food parcels at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. There was a store of food after the Council stopped providing this service and officers were in the process of redistributing the stock out to the food bank providers to help supplement their supplies.

The community shop at Centre 4 in Nunsthorpe, had over the summer, opened up to people from all across the borough and Ms Isaacs mentioned that the Council had been approached and was looking at opening a second shop within North East Lincolnshire. She confirmed she would bring any decisions back to the scrutiny panel.

Members welcomed the update and queried the figures for the 'We Are One Foundation'. Ms Isaacs explained that they were slightly different because they supplied meals and food parcels and their figures were 150 food parcels and 300 hot meals provided in a given week.

Members queried if the food bank providers were doing any analysis into why people were attending the food banks. Ms Vickers explained that one of her tasks over the coming months was to map out the services being provided and the numbers of individuals and families relying on the services.

The Chair made an observation following the homelessness working group that there was a lack of joined up working between the food bank

and free meal providers and he welcomed the work that Ms Vickers was doing to co-ordinate the sector.

Members wanted to understand when residents should be requesting free meals, how much food they should be getting in the food parcels and the frequency. Ms Vickers confirmed this information could be provided. The providers all had different criteria to assess the need of the individuals and families and this was open to abuse. Members felt that more rigorous means testing needed to be considered. Ms Vickers explained that some providers carry out mean tests and others didn't feel there was the need. Her long-term plan was to encourage all the providers to have a rigorous referral system in place and a sharing of information so that food parcels were going where they were most needed.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the panel receive a briefing paper to include the eligibility criteria for food parcels and signposting information.

SPC.31 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There were no questions for the portfolio holder at this meeting.

SPC.32 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call in decisions of recent Cabinet and portfolio holder meetings.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.20 p.m.