

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Crime and Disorder Sub-Committee held at the Bideford Town Hall - Bideford on Wednesday, 13th November, 2024 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Norman (Chair)

Councillors Haworth-Booth, Lethaby and Williams

Officers:

Lead EHO Environmental Protection and Community Protection Officer

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Biederman, Cann, Denton, Hunt, Jusef, Maskell, Milton, Quinn, Renshaw and Whitehead.

7. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Clerk requested a nomination for Chair, Councillor Norman was nominated as Chair.

RESOLVED that in the absence of both the Chair and Vice-Chair Councillor be Chair for the meeting.

8. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH NOVEMBER 2023 (ATTACHED).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

9. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

The Chair reminded North Devon Council Members to complete their Box Phish training.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS.

There were no declarations of interest announced.

11. UPDATE ON THE NORTH DEVON AND TORRIDGE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

At the start of the meeting all members were welcomed to the special joint Committee of Torridge District Council (TDC) and North Devon Council (NDC) to receive an update on the work of North Devon and Torridge Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The Chair for TDC handed over to the Public Health & Community Safety Manager (TDC) who provided a detailed presentation providing an overview of the Community Safety Partnership, and introduced the partners also in attendance. The new Chairing arrangements were also explained - The Public Health & Community Safety Manager (TDC) and Lead EHO Environmental Protection (NDC) were now the joint Chairs of the Partnership, after Superintendent Toby Davies (Devon & Cornwall Police) had stepped down from the role.

The partnership working groups were highlighted, along with the role of Devon and Cornwall Police – dedicated officers for the partnership were Lucy Robinson and Kevin Connar.

The priority areas for the partnership were confirmed as:

Priority 1 – Serious violence and violence against women and girls.

Priority 2 – Safer streets and anti-social behaviour

Priority 3 – Emerging threats/issues (hate crime)

The Public Health & Community Safety Manager (TDC) went on to highlight some of the achievements over the last 12 months:

- Healthy relationships education work in schools, delivered by Fear Free.
- Supporting the work of the Devon Serious Violence Strategy, launched earlier this year.
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and a successful bid for Street Marshalls from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and alignment of the Public Space Protect Orders (PSPO)
- Opening up of the Community Hubs in Bideford & Westward Ho!
- Continuation of funding for night bus provision
- Partnership work with Sunrise Diversity through the Hate Crime sub group.
- OPPC funding was highlighted and how this has supported Street Marshall training and ASB work in schools.

More detail was provided regarding the work taking place on anti-social behaviour. The outcomes of this work since the last update and the number of engagements made by officers over one month.

The Public Health & Community Safety Manager (TDC) handed over to partners from North Devon and Devon and Cornwall Police.

The Lead EHO Environmental Protection (NDC) reflected on the benefit of the partnership work taking place through the CSP and how this had helped in terms of applying for funding. The use of data from both Councils and the Police was noted as important when bidding for Street Marshalls.

Inspector Ewan Sear explained his role in terms of the two districts and, from a policing point of view, explained the significant inroads undertaken as a result of the partnership work and how this was impacting on policing of ASB particularly. Chief Inspector Graham Thomas also recognised the positive partnership work taking place and passed on Superintendent Toby Davies thanks to the joint Chairs of the Partnership.

The Public Health & Community Safety Manager went on to thank Superintendent Davies for his time chairing the CSP and noted the significant contribution he made.

Questions from Torridge District Councillors:

Following a question about the Serious Violence Strategy it was confirmed that TDC was a signed up member of the Devon wide strategy launched earlier in the year.

Members asked what Community Level ASB term covered and Inspector Ewan Sear advised this type of ASB related to severe and persistent ASB that had more significant impact within particular community. It was confirmed this could include gang behaviours.

There was discussion regarding the Community Hub in Westward Ho! Members thanked Sergeant Glynn Clarke and the Community Engagement team for their work setting this up. There was a suggestion that the Hub should be located to a more central and visible area to improve engagement. In relation to pop-up events in Westward Ho! It was these may be better attended with more advance notice.

Both Inspector Ewan Sear and Chief Inspector Graham Thomas explained the purpose of the Community Hub buildings and how this project differed to the engagement events mentioned. It was explained the building was for Officers in the area to use, so they did not need to return to Bideford to complete paperwork.

It was noted this was the first year of the Hub but feedback regarding the location would be taken away, as would any suggested alternative locations. It was also agreed that feedback regarding the amount of notice for engagement events would be taken away.

Members asked if statistics on the issuing of notices for Bideford included the district or just the town, and the Public Health & Community Safety Manager (TDC) confirmed this was district wide. Representatives from the Police went on to explain how these had helped with their workload and the value they had in terms of responding to persistent issues.

Following a question in relation to the route of the night bus and possible extension to other towns in both districts it was explained this would be taken back to Paul Butler, (Devon and Cornwall Police) for a more detailed answer in terms of the

decision making. The continuation of funding was confirmed, and it was stated there was currently no desire to restrict this service.

There was further discussion regarding community engagement work. Inspector Ewan Sear was in agreement at the effectiveness of the work but explained that requests had to be managed in terms of the resources the Police had. It was suggested that where issues arose the team could be contacted to see if an officer was available to attend.

Members asked for an update on the Community Hub at Jubilee Square, Bideford and the opening hours. Inspector Ewan Sear advised that the physical building still required some work. The purpose of the hub was explained and confirmed that that Police Officers were using the space, with Street Marshalls to be based there soon.

Members were advised the hub was not a front office, it was explained that opening / published hours were not shared because Police Officers were on call and expected to leave to respond to incidents.

Detail was provided on the expected use of the facilities and it was explained that primarily it would be used to manage street congregation in the area. Members were advised that since the Hub had been based there incident statistics for that area had dropped and 35% reduction for hot spot patrols.

Following a question about how volunteers could support the Police at the Hub Inspector Ewan Sear arranged to send out information relating to Citizens in Policing Scheme and take away the ideas.

During discussion it was asked how many TDC officers were accredited / authorised to challenge and disrupt alcohol street drinking. The Public Health & Community Safety Manager (TDC) advised that there were currently three TDC officers with accreditation and a further three officers were soon to be accredited.

There were further questions raised in relation to Police presence at Jubilee Square (Bideford), and the recent vandalism to play equipment in Victoria Park (Bideford), which were addressed by the Public Health & Community Safety Manager and Inspector Ewan Sear.

In response to queries about Police presence in Bideford Inspector Ewan Sear advised that Police hot spot reports show an increased police presence in the town and more time spent in zones like Jubilee Square. It was explained that this was being borne out by the statistics already mentioned and feedback from the local shops in the area. It was recognised that there was some displacement following the targeted work at Jubilee Square, and the importance of partnership in responding to the needs of the street attached in Bideford was highlighted.

In relation to vandalism at Victoria Park, the Public Health & Community Safety Manager (TDC) advised that discussions were taking place around upgrading the CCTV near the park, but this would need to be subject to costings.

Members restated their concern regarding the recent vandalism of the play equipment in Victoria Park and need for improvements to CCTV in the area. It was felt there was an urgency required.

The Public Health & Community Safety Manager (TDC) advised there was CCTV covering the park, but the incident happened at night and the image quality was affected as a result. It was confirmed that Officers were looking to upgrade the CCTV and it may be upgraded subject to funding.

Members noted the rurality of North Devon and Torridge and asked what lessons had been learned from the tragic incident in Plymouth in terms of safeguarding and fire arms licences.

Inspector Ewan Sear advised of the review and subsequent changes that had taken place at Devon and Cornwall Police and nationally, following the incident at Plymouth. It was explained that this had resulted in extra firearms Officers and a more robust application and review process, and it was confirmed that a backlog of reviews had been cleared now. It was confirmed this would continue to be an area of focus and further partnership work would need to be explored.

It was asked what Members could do if they had concerns about firearms and someone's mental wellbeing. It was also asked how Members would report any concerns they had around someone's access to firearms.

Chief Inspector Graham Thomas arranged to look into how concerns from health professionals would be reported to the Police and advised Members how important it was to make the Police aware of any concerns.

Questions from North Devon Councillors:

During discussion Chair for NDC thanked Superintendent Davies for his support to the CSP over the years.

Members referred to the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer mentioned in the report. It was asked if this post covered Ilfracombe and whether the Street Marshal patrols would be extended past two days. It was also asked how local businesses in any town would make contact with Street Marshals for assistance.

The Lead EHO Environmental Protection (NDDC) confirmed that, at present, the funding for Street Marshals in Ilfracombe was for two days, however, the data being collated would be used to demonstrate any further need. Members were provided with some context regarding the issues being experienced in Ilfracombe, and the work taking place to manage these issues. It was arranged that the Lead EHO Environmental Protection (NDC) would find out how businesses could contact Street Marshals for assistance.

Chief Inspector Graham Thomas reassured Members that the ASB Officer had been undertaking street patrols with the Street Marshals in Ilfracombe and noted the difference being made as a result. Detail on the radio system used in Barnstaple – Shop Watch – was also highlighted, and this led to a question about Street Watch in

Ilfracombe. The Lead EHO Environmental Protection (NDC) explained how WhatsApp had superseded this initiative, and arranged to explore whether this could be set up in Ilfracombe with the ASB Officer.

Chair advised of current discussions on budget setting at North Devon and advised to raise any requests for Ilfracombe via this process.

Members asked if there were plans for a Community Hub in North Devon and the Lead EHO Environmental Protection (NDC) updated on the plans for a Hub in Greenlanes Shopping Centre, as well as work taking place in Ilfracombe. The rurality of the district and the potential benefits of hub model in terms of officer time were also explained.

It was agreed to circulate the Presentation.

Members thanked Barnstaple Police for their support of the vigils that had been taking place in the town over the last 12 months. Chair also thanked the Police for support in the tourism areas over the summer months too.

Inspector Ewan Sear advised of an uplift in funding, which had meant that more appropriate vehicles would be available to reach the more rural locations to help with visibility in the more hard to reach towns.

During discussion members were advised of an initiative to convert two posts in Ilfracombe area to become hybrid posts and this concept was explained for Members. These Officers would be available to meet the demand and increase presence and visibility for the public

Both Chairs thanked Officers for the report and for attending Committee.

Chair

The meeting ended at 11.10 am