

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing and Community Safety Committee held in the Barum Room - Brynsworthy on Tuesday, 14th November, 2023 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor York (Chair)

Councillors Biederman, Cann, Denton, Haworth-Booth, Hunt, Jusef, Norman, Quinn, Whitehead and Williams

Officers:

Solicitor, Paralegal, Community Safety Sergeant and Community Protection Officer

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Maskell, Milton and Renshaw.

18. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 (circulated previously) be approved and signed by the Chair.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest announced.

20. FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURE OF COMMUNITY SAFETY IN NORTH DEVON

The Committee received a presentation from the Community Protection Officer.

The Community Protection Officer introduced the Community Safety Sergeant who was located in an office at Brynsworthy Environment Centre.

The Community Protection Officer presented the following:

- The functions and structure of Community Safety in North Devon.
- The Statutory basis for the partnership was underpinned by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy) Regulations 2007.
- Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 required Responsible Authorities in a Local Government area to work together in formulating and implementing strategies to tackle local crime and disorder.

- This was the formation of Community Safety Partnerships – local agencies working together to address crime and disorder.
- The Crime and Disorder (Formulation and Implementation of Strategy) Regulations 2007 sets out the way in which Responsible Authorities should carry out their functions as a Community Safety Partnership. There was a requirement to prepare a partnership plan for the Local Government area, setting out the priorities and a County level community safety agreement, setting out the ways the Responsible Authorities in the County might work more effectively to implement the identified priorities by joint working.
- The introduction of the Police, Crime and Sentencing Act 2022 required the specified Responsible Authorities for a Local Government are to collaborate with each other to prevent and reduce serious violence.
- The duty to plan together to exercise their functions to prevent and reduce serious violence in the area. In particular, identification of the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of serious violence and the preparation and implementation of a strategy for exercising functions to prevent and reduce serious violence in the area.
- The North Devon Community Safety Partnership works jointly with Torridge District Council's Community Safety Partnership. The Police work across both borders so it makes sense the Local Authorities work together.
- There are examples of similar joint partnerships across Devon such as South Devon and Dartmoor and East and Mid Devon.
- The partnership had a duty to meet to be scrutinised by both Council's Crime and Disorder Sub-Committees.
- The meeting for 2023 was scheduled on 30 November where two meetings were held consecutively with the Chair for both Authority's respective committee in attendance.
- The Statutory partners included the Local Authority, Police, Fire, Probation, County and Health Authorities.
- The non-Statutory partners included North Devon Against Domestic Abuse (NDADA), Devonwide Drug and Alcohol Services, Fear Free, Sunrise Diversity, NDVS, TTVS.
- The current Chair of the North Devon and Torridge Community Safety Partnership was Superintendent Davies. The Police did not chair other Partnerships in Devon.
- The relationship between partners in Devon were strong and had developed useful day-to-day communications.

In response to a question, the Community Protection Officer advised that Councillor York had been present at the recent, quarterly, Community Safety Partnership meeting. Normally the Council's representative, Councillor C. Leaver would have been in attendance but was unable to attend this particular meeting.

Councillor York added that at a previous meeting she had raised the disconnect between the partnership and the Licensing and Community Safety Committee, hence the decision was taken to add a Community Safety update as a standing item on future agendas.

The Community Safety Sergeant addressed the committee advising that the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership was keen to address the deficit in terms of member participation.

The Chair requested that the Community Protection Officer feedback to the next Partnership meeting the request for the Chairs of the respective committees from Torridge District Council and North Devon Council be formally appointed as members of the partnership.

Councillor Biederman put forward the motion to recommend that a Chair from each authority was appointed, in addition to, the Councils' Community Safety Partnership Representative to the Community Safety Partnership.

The Community Protection officer resumed his presentation:

- At the recent quarterly meeting of the Community Safety Partnership three overarching priorities were agreed:
 - Serious Violence including Violence Against Women and Girls
 - Safer Streets and Anti-Social Behaviour; and
 - Emerging Themes – Hate Crime
- It was worth mentioning that North Devon was one of the safest places to live in the UK.
- A lot of work was carried out at a local level working to prevent young people from taking a path towards criminality.
- The serious violence duty the Police were bound to discharge focussed on children in care placements, who were more likely to be vulnerable to slipping into crime, along with Children with special educational needs.
- People who had been displaced from their community and became isolated could be vulnerable to bad choices. The partnership was working to be proactive on what causes issues of crime and anti-social behaviours.
- A serious violence assessment had been developed to focus on preventative work in this area and was still developing. Funding of £4,000 had been received to tackle serious crime issues and it was likely it would be used around the issue of domestic violence.

In response to an observation made that the figures reported were never accurate, the Community Safety Sergeant responded that there were many reasons why people lost confidence in contacting the Police. This could be reflected in inaccuracies in reporting and that reporting could only be made on the figures that were available. He understood the frustrations on not being able to get hold of the Police.

He went on to thank Councillor Jusef for raising the points that the phone service 101 was not working and that the advice to people to go online was not helpful to those in the community whose first language was not English and the aged population who did not have access to the internet. He acknowledged that there were still tranches of society who did not use modern technologies.

In response to observations that a point of contact for the Police in the Centre of town was a great idea and on not seeing mental health issues as a priority, the

Community Safety Sergeant responded that the effects of aggressive behaviours by the public towards officers had a detrimental effect on morale and resulted in sickness/absences from work. No one wanted to come to work to be abused. Training was being undertaken to help customer service officer's deal with abuse. Dealing with suicidal individuals was a very resource intense issue. Preventative work focussing on street attached individuals who often had issues with drug and alcohol misuse, which could lead to mental health problems was a priority.

The Community Safety Sergeant added that there had been a gap in the Police team across both Torridge and North Devon. A new Community Safety Police officer had been recruited filling this gap.

In response to a question on recruitment problems, the Community Safety Sergeant advised that according to Government guidelines recruitment requirement had been filled. With the influx of people moving to the area to live population numbers were always on the rise so the Police could always benefit from more officers. The Police had to work smarter with the resources that were available.

In response to an observation that the number of Community Police Officers had halved in recent years and therefore as a result Anti-Social Behaviour had increased, the Community Safety Sergeant replied that there were a lot of challenges, apathy amongst the community resulted in the drop in numbers recruited as Community Police Officers. How all people were treated in the community mattered. Ensuring that the available resources were used to their best potential was vital.

The Chair added that statistics showed that the presence of Street Marshalls in Barnstaple had helped to lower anti-social behaviour issues.

The Community Protection Officer resumed his presentation:

- Safer Devon was the mechanism that allowed partners to work together. It's Statutory Duty was at a Local District level but it made sense for all Community Safety Partnerships to work together.
- The Board of the Safer Devon group was made up of the Chairs from all the different Community Safety Partnerships, representatives from Devon County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioners Office.
- The role of Safer Devon was to produce a yearly strategic assessment of its work carried out and a serious violence assessment.
- Sub groups of Safer Devon included Youth Crime prevention which focussed on serious violence and SPACE – a group addressing the deficit of youth liaison.
- Devon and Torbay Prevent Partnership was a scheme to stop people being drawn into terrorism activity. Ways to divert people away from terrorism were discussed.
- Devon was a risk area for terrorism activity but not as great a risk as a city for example. Prevent guidance stated that there should be a group in the area with the expectation that statutory authorities work together, As a low risk area meetings were only attended if a referral on a resident in Devon had been made.

- Other Statutory Responsibilities included the Prevent scheme as well as serious violence and Domestic Homicide Reviews.
- The approach to serious violence in Devon was focussed on prevention. Unlike cities, there were no gang activities in the area.
- Domestic homicide reviews gave an opportunity for lessons to be learnt, and the Safer Devon group had the statutory duty to carry out these reviews.
- The role of members in connection with the Community Safety partnership was to act as a voice for their community. Issues would likely be reported to members via the public. If this was the case then information about this issue should be emailed to the Community Safety Officer who would offer assistance with issues.
- Having a regular meeting with the Licensing and Community Safety committee would be very helpful to keep Officers informed of any issues arising.

The Chair requested a visual flow diagram of the hierarchy of all the different groups working in the partnership to come to the next meeting.

The Chair thanked the Community Safety Sergeant and Community Protection Officer for their attendance at the meeting and for the really useful presentation.

RECOMMENDED that the Chair of Licensing and Community Safety Committee, North Devon Council and the Chair of the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Torridge District Council be put forward to become appointed members of the Community Safety Partnership.

21. LICENSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing and Community Safety Sub-Committee A (circulated previously) held on 25 August 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Chair

The meeting ended at 11.55 am

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.