

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

THURSDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor S Golton in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, J Akhtar,
A Maloney, J Tudor, A Hannan,
A McCluskey, A Rontree, S Seary, A Khan,
N Harrington and D Blackburn

26 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusals of inspection of documents.

27 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items excluded from the public domain.

28 Late Items

There were no late items.

29 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

30 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from the following Scrutiny Board members: Cllr P Stables (Cllr D Blackburn attended as a substitute) and Cllr P Grahame.

Apologies were also received from James Rogers (Director, Communities, Housing and Environment), Alison Lowe (Deputy mayor, WYCA), Paul Money (Chief Officer, Safer, Stronger Communities).

31 Minutes - 20 July 2023

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of 20 July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

32 Matters Arising

Minute 22:

It was noted that the Communities Team has requested nominations from all five Scrutiny Boards for representatives to sit on the Member Working group as part of the Community Committee review. Scrutiny Board members agreed the nominees on behalf of the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing & Communities) would be Cllr S Golton and Cllr B Anderson

It was also agreed in July that a further update would be provided to the Scrutiny Board on the progress of the review later in the municipal year. This has provisionally been scheduled for December 2023.

Minute 23:

As requested in July, a written briefing was circulated to board members outlining the measures being taken by Leeds City Council to assess the level of risk from radon gas in Leeds.

Members of the Board reflected on the advice provided and recommended that an update on the progress of phase 1 testing is provided to the successor scrutiny board early in the next municipal year.

33 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report: 'Out of Order: learning lessons from antisocial behaviour.'

RESOLVED - It was agreed that the report be noted.

34 West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024

Under the Police and Reform and Social Responsibility Act the WYCA Mayor must produce a Police and Crime Plan which sets out the strategic policing and crime priorities for West Yorkshire and how she plans to meet them.

The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) is allocated special responsibility to exercise the functions of a crime and disorder committee through Article 6 of the Constitution. In the context of this responsibility the Scrutiny Board considered an update on the Police and Crime Plan 2021 – 2024.

In attendance for this item were:

- Cllr D Coupar (Executive Member)
- Cllr Eileen Taylor (Chair of the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel)
- Julie Reid (Head of Police & Crime WYCA)
- Wendy Stevens (Research and Performance Team, WYCA)
- Jonathan Pickles (Policy and Performance Lead, WYCA)
- Fran Sandhu (Policy Manger, WYCA)
- Chief Inspector Lucy Leadbeater (West Yorkshire Police)
- Chief Superintendent Steve Dodds (West Yorkshire Police)

CS Steve Dodds provided introductory comments. He highlighted the work of neighbourhood policing teams and the importance of strong representation in communities.

Members were informed that there has been an increase within West Yorkshire Police of 20 officers within neighbourhood policing, which follows an earlier uplift of 70 patrol officers.

An update was provided on performance in relation to several categories of offences including violence with injury, robbery, theft from motor vehicles and serious violence.

The local partnership approach to tackling anti-social behaviour was explored by the Scrutiny Board, with representatives from West Yorkshire Police outlining the way in which this can facilitate bespoke solutions to challenges in different areas of the city.

An update was provided in relation to the work of the dedicated city centre policing team.

Members considered the local approach to tackling Domestic Violence, noting the importance of daily assessment meetings, which involve a range of partners.

A notable rise in hate crime was highlighted. In response, members were informed there has been an increase in hate co-ordinators in the city and police partners reassured the Scrutiny Board that they continue to work with communities with the aim of building trust and preventing community tension.

Police partners outlined a series of successful operations to tackle organised crime including drug related offences, youth crime and child exploitation.

Members sought an update in relation to work with schools and explored ways in which the police are tackling violence against women and girls.

Julie Reid provided introductory comments noting that the appended report focused on the elements of the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan that link to Leeds. She reiterated that the mayoral authority works closely with police and community safety partners to support their work, as well as setting the Police and Crime Plan in accordance with statutory requirements and providing additional funding to support initiatives that reflect the Mayor's identified priorities.

Cllr Coupar highlighted the importance of partnership working in Leeds and thanked those present for their input into that partnership.

Members were reassured that West Yorkshire Police takes a "strong and consistent" approach to recording crimes.

Enforcement of 20mph speed limits was considered with CS Dodds reiterating the city-wide challenge of balancing police resources with varied and competing demands, risks and threats to safety.

Members of the Scrutiny Board requested clarity regarding the way in which the force aims to enforce 20mph speed limits and the approach to the pursuit of people on vehicles such as quad bikes who are engaging in anti-social behaviour.

Further information was sought in relation to the criteria for resource allocation across the city. Members were informed that Leeds receives around 36% of regional funding due to the assessed levels of risks and threats.

Members were informed that West Yorkshire Police is taking action to improve the diversity of its force, including within senior leadership teams. The importance of consistency of staffing within neighbourhood policing teams was highlighted, with members reiterating the benefit of neighbourhood policing teams developing a strong local knowledge base.

Members were advised that the best contact for queries is the relevant NPT inspector.

Reassurance was received in relation to preparations to prevent anti-social behaviour during the period encompassing bonfire night, Halloween and mischief night.

Members explored the approach to criminal damage at a ward level including graffiti and tagging, highlighting the “pervasive impact” on communities. In response, CS Dodds noted that resource allocation in the city prioritises tackling serious and violent crime, and he highlighted the difficulty of identifying those causing criminal damage through behaviours such as tagging. Members highlighted the challenge of removing graffiti on third party properties.

Ways in which to report crime were discussed and the challenges with recruitment and retention within the contact team at West Yorkshire Police noted.

Julie Reid outlined the way in which the Safer Communities Fund utilises proceeds of crime to support local schemes that reflect the police and crime plan priorities. Members queried whether community committees might be able to apply for a proportion of funding for schemes within their wards and sought further information about whether there may be a mechanism for community committees to allocate a proportion of that funding to groups or projects within their respective areas.

The importance of effective communication between members and their neighbourhood policing teams was discussed along with challenges associated with access to information about local police activity.

RESOLVED – To note the contents of the report.

35 Safer, Stronger Communities - Leeds Plan Update

Members received a report detailing an annual update against priorities in the Safer Strong Communities Leeds Plan 2021 – 2024.

In attendance for this item were:

Minutes approved at the meeting
held on Thursday, 12th October, 2023

- Cllr D Coupar (Executive Member)
- Cllr Eileen Taylor (Chair of the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel)
- Julie Reid (Head of Police & Crime WYCA)
- Wendy Stevens (Research and Performance Team, WYCA)
- Jonathan Pickles – (Policy and Performance Lead, WYCA)
- Fran Sandhu – (Policy Manger, WYCA)
- Chief Inspector Lucy Leadbeater (West Yorkshire Police)
- Nadeem Siddique (Head of Community Relations and Cohesion)
- Kevin Brighton (Development & Improvement – Anti Social Behaviour)
- Simon Hodgson (Head of Community Safety Services)
- Magdalena Boo (Head of Public Health)
- Geoff Turnbull (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Manager)
- Jude Roberts (Manager Safeguarding)

Cllr Coupar provided introductory comments, noting the strength of partnership working in the city.

Simon Hodgson provided an overview of the Safer Strong Communities Leeds Plan and highlighted how recent organisational changes had enabled more joined up working with youth services and the localities team.

Officers provided introductory remarks in relation to nine priority areas:

- ASB and Public Order

Kevin Brighton welcomed organisational changes that had enabled closer working with colleagues in the youth service, housing and localities team. He noted the importance of strengthening prevention and intervention activities to reduce anti-social behaviour, including supporting and diverting young people away from the criminal justice system.

The benefits of having established a mediation service within LASBT was explored and members were informed that locality-focused planning for the period including bonfire night is used as an example of best practice by other authorities.

Members were updated on partnership work with the city's universities to respond to anti-social behaviour in areas predominantly occupied by the student population. The renewal of the Northwest Leeds PSPO was also highlighted noted as an important tool in tackling anti-social behaviour associated with the Otley Run.

Community based problem solving was identified as a way in which to target the work of partners to reduce risk, threat and harm in different communities. Members sought and received information about the vehicular nuisance public space protection order, which came into effect in April 2023.

Members also sought updates in relation to the way in which disputes between tenants of registered social landlords and owner-occupiers can be resolved. Information about signposting and support was provided to the Board.

Kevin advised members that he anticipates the development of a member protocol around reporting systems for ASB, which can be shared with community committees and scrutiny members in the coming months.

Officers were asked to consider how communication of good news can be improved to highlight successes.

- Domestic Violence and Abuse

Jude Roberts confirmed that the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board has just released a draft Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy 2023-28 that has been co-produced with key partners as well as victims and survivors.

Members were reassured that work is ongoing to develop a safe accommodation strategy but it was noted that there are still significant challenges around domestic violence and the availability of housing. Members were informed that a new Sanctuary Support Team has been established to support victims and children who remain in their homes.

Funding for an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor has been extended until 2025 to support young people at the Front Door.

An update was provided in relation to Operation Encompass, which allows for notifications to be made to schools where there has been an incident of domestic violence.

Jude reflected upon an application for Home Office funding to support the development of project for perpetrators of domestic abuse. Local partners are awaiting feedback as to why the application has not been successful.

Further information was provided in relation to a visit from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, workforce development and the way in which the views of those with lived experience are being represented on the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board.

- Hate Crime

Geoff Turnbull provided an update to the Scrutiny Board on the responsibility of the Hate Crime Strategic Board for the Leeds Hate Crime Strategy.

He highlighted work with schools to improve hate crime reporting and the role of both third-party reporting centres and third-party signposting centres.

The Scrutiny Board explored the increase in disability hate crime in Leeds and the work that is ongoing to better understand and deal with disability hate crime.

Members received an update in relation to local plans for Hate Crime Awareness Week, which is taking place 14 – 21 October 2023.

Attention was drawn to planned communication linked to anti-semitism and anti-Muslim prejudices, and a billboard campaign which will include content about hate crime and misogyny.

- Illicit Drugs and Substance Use

Magdalena Boo provided an outline of the partnership working around drugs and alcohol in Leeds, including information about how new funding has been used locally and the strength of the Leeds Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board.

Members were informed that Leeds has excellent treatment outcomes.

An outline of a pilot projects to treat opioid dependence and street drinkers was provided to the Scrutiny Board, with officers committing to learn from the results of these programmes.

- Offending Behaviours

Simon Hodgson welcomed a 2022 refresh of the Reducing Reoffending Board, which has resulted in closer collaborative working with public, private and third sector partners including HM Prisons and Probation Service.

Members were informed that the Board has helped to develop the Leeds Reducing Reoffending Delivery Plan which identified pathways to reduce reoffending.

Accommodation and prisoner release have been identified as key priorities, along with an increased focus on an effective prisoner release process.

Members acknowledged the challenge of identifying suitable accommodation for prisoners upon release and noted the process for consultation with local ward members.

Progress has been made in several areas with a workstream focused on education, training and employment now in development. Work on a Female Accommodation Strategy was also highlighted as an area of focus.

Members sought reassurance that work to improve the transition to release is taking place across the region and with cross-border institutions, particularly for women. Members sought further information about the risk of coercive control and financial abuse for female prisoners.

- Organised Crime and Street Gangs

Chief Inspector Lucy Leadbeater provided an insight into work to tackle organised crime and street gangs with a focus on localities, so that communities feel empowered to support change. This includes targeting known 'hot spots.'

Exploitation of vulnerable people was explored with CI Leadbeater highlighting the importance of raising awareness in communities of how exploitation might be identified.

Prevention, intervention and diversion were identified as priorities in partnership work to reduce youth violence.

- Exploitation and Radicalisation

Nadeem Siddique provided an update on the evolving work of the Prevent counter terrorism partnership, noting that the model in Leeds has been identified as exceptionally effective by the Home Office.

Nadeem highlighted work to identify children at risk of exploitation and the role of Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meetings.

The importance of training, awareness raising, and community engagement were explored, with members noting the contention nature of this area of work.

- People with multiple needs (Street Users and Sex Workers)

Updates were provided in relation to the number of rough sleepers in Leeds and work to prevent homelessness.

It was noted that the Leeds Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2023 – 2027 has been launched and members sought information about accommodation strategies.

- Violence and sexual crime

The Board was provided with an update into work to reduce violence against women and girls, including the delivery of a Women's Night Safe Space, enhancement of the 'Ask Angela' initiative and the provision of Night Safe Marshals.

Members requested a dedicated meeting on the Council's approach to tackling graffiti.

Further information was requested about the context of reported hate crime so as to understand the environments where such crimes are most likely to occur. Geoff Turnbull committed to considering how such information might be provided to the Scrutiny Board.

Cllr Maloney left the meeting at 12.30pm

RESOLVED –

- a) To note the contents of the report.
- b) That the Principal Scrutiny Advisor should co-ordinate an additional meeting of the Scrutiny Board to explore the Council's approach to tackling graffiti in local communities.
- c) That Geoff Turnbull will explore how additional context can be provided in relation to reported hate crimes.

36 Work Schedule

Appended to the work programme report were the following documents:

- A draft work schedule for 2023/24.
- Executive Board minutes for the meeting of 26 July 2023.

Members were reminded that a remote budget briefing would be taking place at 10.30am on 21 September 2023 for all Scrutiny board members.

Members were advised that several member development sessions are taking place during the Autumn which will cover topics that fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities). Dates will be distributed by the Member Development team.

RESOLVED – that the work schedule for 2023/24 be noted.

37 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next public meeting of the Scrutiny Board will take place on **12 October 2023 at 10.30am**. There will be a pre-meeting for all board members at **10.00am**.