

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

THURSDAY, 18TH JULY, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor S Golton in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, A Maloney,
A Hannan, A McCluskey, N Harrington,
S Ali, L Cunningham, Z Hussain and
M Iqbal

13 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

14 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items excluded from the public domain.

15 Late Items

There were no late items.

16 Declaration of Interests

Cllr Cunningham requested that the record notes she is an addiction nurse at Forward Leeds.

17 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from Cllr Luke Farley. Cllr Eleanor Thomson attended as a substitute.

The Scrutiny Board also noted apologies from James Rogers (Director, Communities, Housing & Environment) and Cllr Mary Harland (Executive Member, Communities, Customer Services and Community Safety).

The Chair sent the best wishes of the Scrutiny Board to Cllr Harland.

18 Minutes - 20 June 2024

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting of 20 June 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

19 Progress Against the Priorities of the Police and Crime Plan 2021-24.

Those in attendance for this item were:

- Alison Lowe (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime)
- Julie Reid (Head of Policing and Crime)
- Wendy Stevens (Research and Policy Manager)
- Katherine Bates (Research and Performance Officer)
- Chief Superintendent Stephen Dodds (Leeds District Commander, West Yorkshire Police)
- Paul Money (Chief Officer, Safer, Stronger Communities)

Deputy Mayor Alison Lowe provide introductory comments in relation to t progress made against the Police and Crime Plan 2021 – 24. She advised the Scrutiny Board that under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the 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.

She outlined the consultation process that had informed the Police and Crime Plan and reminded the Board of the four priorities that were the focus of the three-year strategy.

Alison Lowe reiterated her commitment to transparency in terms of how she holds the police to account on behalf of the West Yorkshire Mayor. She noted that Scrutiny has a role to play in reflecting the views of local people and therefore informing the way in which she seeks to hold West Yorkshire Police to account.

In response to member queries, she clarified the governance arrangements relating to herself, the Mayor, the Police and Crime Panel and West Yorkshire Police.

Members sought more information about the way in which West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and West Yorkshire Police work with partners to address cross border crimes. They were reassured by Alison Lowe and CSI Stephen Dodds that Leeds District Police and the Mayor work closely with counterparts in other localities across all tiers of their organisations.

The Scrutiny Board explored the balance between encouraging the public to report a crime and ensuring that the public do not put themselves at risk in the process of doing so.

Members raised concern about dangerous driving and obstructive parking near schools in the context of the local and regional Vision Zero ambitions. Alison Lowe outlined the regional activity in relation to Vision Zero but acknowledged the long term challenge of delivering societal change in relation to driving behaviours.

The Scrutiny Board was advised that colleagues on the Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth Scrutiny Board would be examining Vision Zero in detail in September as part of their remit relating to highways.

Members welcomed the establishment of a Safer Travel Team and queried how the 15 PCSOs within that team are deployed across the region. The Scrutiny Board was informed that their work is informed by data provided through the Bus Safety Feedback Tool, which is available to passengers through the MCard app and website. Further information was provided about the communication strategy that supports and promotes this initiative.

Members requested a more detailed breakdown from the Deputy Mayor about where the Safer Travel team have been deployed to date and the reasons that have informed decisions about their deployment. Alison Lowe agreed to share information about the first six months of the project once that data is available.

Paul Money proposed that awareness raising of projects such as the Safer Travel Team could be considered as part of the refresh of the role of community safety champions, as part of the Community Committee review.

Members examined the approach to engagement with young people as part of the development of the new Police and Crime Plan. The Deputy mayor informed the Scrutiny Board that the current Police and Crime Plan had been created with young people in mind and young people remain an important consideration.

Alison Lowe outlined the role of the Violence Reduction Partnership in leading on interventions that have young people as a target audience. She also outlined the way in which WYCA engage with young people throughout the region via schools, youth groups and community organisations. She highlighted the role of the Mayor's Youth Advisory Group.

The Deputy Mayor advised the scrutiny members about the upcoming launch of the combined authority's Child First framework, which will advocate a new approach across all workstreams.

Members raised ongoing concerns about the safety of women and girls, noting the way in which Safer Parks guidance - produced by the University of Leeds and funded by WYCA - had informed the Scrutiny Board's approach to the design of greenspaces.

It was noted that £10k has been allocated to each West Yorkshire district to lever in further funding to support best practice in public realm design. Members expressed concern about the level of impact this funding could deliver.

The Deputy Mayor acknowledged the limited funding available for projects linked to parks. However, she provided examples of improvements across two

community parks in the region which have been developed in accordance with the Safer Parks Guidance and in consultation with local women and girls.

Members welcomed the increase in the proportion of frontline officers and staff recruited from ethnic minorities, while recognising that this still needs to increase further.

Members examined information relating to contacts with West Yorkshire Police. Improvements in call waiting times for 101 were highlighted, although the Mayor and CSI Dodds acknowledged waits could be longer than average during peak periods.

It was suggested that a reduction in 101 calls may reflect the fact that there are now more ways in which to report crimes. Members acknowledged the positive performance in relation to answering 999 calls with the service achieving the second fastest average answer time in the country during the last quarter.

In response to member queries, it was confirmed that the Mayor has surpassed her target for increasing the number of officers and staff in comparison to April 2021.

Concerns were outlined about organised crime, trap houses and drug dealing in some areas of the city. Partners considered the importance of a multi-agency response to such issues and recognised the impact on residents.

Similarly, a targeted response to reports of anti-social behaviour by groups of men in Roundhay Park was also discussed.

The Chair sought more information about the process of evaluation of performance and learning from the last three years that will inform the development of the next Police and Crime Plan.

The Chair thanked partners for their attendance and for the comprehensive report provided to members ahead of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed that:

- a) The report be noted.
- b) Paul Money will reflect on opportunities for the refreshed remit of the Community Safety Champions to include engagement relating to schemes such as the Safer Travel Team.
- c) Deputy Mayor's office will provide further information about the deployment of the Safer Travel Team once data is available. Safer Travel Team once data is available.

20 Leeds Neighbourhoods & Partnerships policing update to Scrutiny Board 2024

Those in attendance for this item were:

- Chief Superintendent Stephen Dodds (Leeds District Commander, West Yorkshire Police)
- Chief Inspector Natasha Tierney (West Yorkshire Police)
- Paul Money (Chief Officer, Safer, Stronger Communities)

At the invitation of the Chair, CSI Stephen Dodds provided an introductory overview of the current activities, successes and challenges associated with Leeds District's Neighbourhood and Partnerships work to support community safety in the city.

He advised the Scrutiny Board that there has been a 9% reduction in crimes as compared to the previous 12-month period, which represented a fall of more than 28,000 offences. He went on to outline the structure of the teams in Leeds, highlighting the additional resources deployed to support the Off-Road Bike Team.

Key headlines identified in his comments included:

- Reductions in arson, residential burglary, criminal damage and theft of motor vehicles.
- A rise in rape and sexual offences attributable to more confident reporting and better police recording.
- An increase in shoplifting, albeit that the increase is at a lower rate than reported last year.
- The introduction of Solving Problems in Neighbourhoods (SPIN) meetings has been rolled out across the district and is seen as an example of best practice across the wider force.
- Targeted work in East Leeds has sought to tackle drugs related crime and has resulted in 35 arrests.
- Partnership working with Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team continues to be a significant part of the response to anti-social behaviour in the city.
- Domestic violence incidents have reduced but those being reported are increasingly complex. There has also been an increase in Claire's Law referrals.
- An update was provided on a partnership intensification month focused on knife crime which included bringing the Knife Angel to Leeds.

- Protests linked to current global events continue to require a neighbourhood policing presence, which involves diverting police officers from their core neighbourhood duties.

The Scrutiny Board thanked police partners for the thorough and encouraging report and welcomed an anticipated uplift in PCSOs and constables in Leeds.

At the request of members CSI Dodds provided an overview of the way in which officer resource is allocated across the district. He informed members that a formula is used centrally to deploy officers to district commanders – this considers issues including recorded crime, population, demand and environmental factors. Resource is then allocated locally according to need – CSI Dodds noted the need to have a minimum level of staff to meet on call demand for 101 and 999 calls, and to maintain staffing of safeguarding teams.

Members noted the reported decrease in antisocial behaviour linked to nuisance motorcycles and suggested this was contrary to the perception of residents in many communities in Leeds.

In response, members were advised that the efforts of the off-road team have delivered results and additional officers will be allocated to support their work to tackle the misuse of motorcycles and quads. The Scrutiny Board was advised that much of the work of the team relies upon gathering local evidence about perpetrators, particularly in areas identified as ‘hot spots.’ It is anticipated that there may be an increase in reports linked to more serious crimes such as vehicle thefts.

Other issues linked to the use of motorcycles and electric bikes included links to drug related crimes, the use of drones to follow perpetrators, and the most appropriate routes for reporting intimidatory but not necessarily criminal behaviours.

Members sought and received clarity around the financial challenges facing the force and expressed concern that pressure on the Council’s community budgets would further reduce the availability of funding for local officers.

Arrangements for training related to domestic violence, financial exploitation and coercive control were confirmed.

The Scrutiny Board explored the work of the multi-agency partnership group in response to anti-social behaviour linked to the Otley Run. During May action days were held to address behaviours that are known to increase in the summer. This approach was supported, included financially, by local members and will be replicated in August.

Members of the Board sought further information about whether a similar multi-agency response could be provided where regular incidents of anti-social behaviour are identified in town and district centres.

The Scrutiny Board acknowledged the detailed information about hate crime in the report and noted that a further session specifically examining hate crime was scheduled for December.

The Chair thanked partners for their attendance and for the substantial detail in the report presented to members, including the RAG rated data.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed to:

- a) Note the report.
- b) Request further information from West Yorkshire Police about the number of domestic violence incidents and convictions in Leeds.

21 Safer Leeds Annual Update

Individuals in attendance for this item were:

- Paul Money (Chief Officer, Safer Stronger Communities Team)
- Nadeem Siddique (Head of Community Relations and Cohesion)
- Claire Smith (Head of Safer Neighbourhoods & ASB)
- Mark Charlton (Head of Community Safeguarding)
- Chief Superintendent Stephen Dodds (Leeds District Commander, West Yorkshire Police)
- Chief Inspector Natasha Tierney (West Yorkshire Police)

Paul Money provided introductory comments in relation to both:

- a) Final annual update against priorities included in the Safer Stronger Communities Leeds Plan 2021 – 2024.
- b) Leeds Community Safety Strategy 2024 – 2027.

He reiterated the priorities reflected in the Safer Stronger Communities Leeds Plan 2021-2024 and emphasised the understanding amongst the team of the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour on individuals and communities.

He noted the alignment of the priorities within the Safer Stronger Communities Leeds Plan 2021 – 2024 with the Community Safety Strategy 2024-2027. He highlighted the importance across both strategies of early intervention and preventative activity informed by strong community intelligence.

Paul summarised the progress made against key deliverables within the current strategy. Work over recent years has included a focus on long term problem solving in communities, tackling violence against women and girls, and tackling serious youth violence.

The Scrutiny Board reflected on the strong partnership arrangements in place in Leeds and recognised that these are integral to delivering progress in relation to shared priorities. Members acknowledged the need for alignment between the Safer Stronger Communities Leeds Plan 2021 – 2024 and the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024.

Members welcomed the victim satisfaction measures presented in both reports and the reflections on the lived experience of those affected by crime. It was noted that it would be helpful to understand the distribution of crimes in terms of more localised geography as well as by the type of crime.

Claire Smith provided an overview of the Capable Guardian Service including the number of officers, patterns of work and the impact of high visibility patrols.

In response to member queries, Claire Smith confirmed that the collaborative approach to noise nuisance in areas occupied by the student population will be continued given the significance impact on the work. The agreement has led to a reduction in noise complaints and the introduction of a 'Capable Guardian' in the area has led to a significant reduction in crime.

It was noted that funding for the capable guardian service is provided via the UKSPF until March 2025.

Members welcomed the innovative partnerships delivering effective interventions in specific areas of the city. Claire confirmed that such approaches could be replicated in other areas such as town and district centres if specific concerns are identified and activities can be delivered using existing resources.

In response to member queries about future engagement with Scrutiny, Paul noted the importance of engagement with elected members in their capacity as community advocates who can reflect the concerns of local people.

Members again welcomed the detailed information relating to hate crime and highlighted that this would be subject to detailed consideration later in the municipal year.

Claire Smith agreed to consider whether the powers included in the city wide PSPO for vehicle nuisance could be applied more broadly to tackle the anti-social use of motorcycles and electric bikes.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the contents of the report and reiterated their commitment to examine hate crime in more detail as a standalone item later in the municipal year.

22 Community Safety Strategy

This report was discussed in conjunction with the Safer Leeds Annual Update with details included under minute 21.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed to note the content of the report and endorse the planned approach ahead of the final version being considered by Executive Board.

23 Work Schedule

RESOLVED: Members noted the draft work programme 2024/25.

24 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next public meeting of the Scrutiny Board will take place on **19 September 2024** at **10.30am**. There will be a pre meeting for all board members at **10.00am**.