

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Agenda Item: 4**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held on Thursday 17 November 2022 at 10.02am.**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillors: J Halls (Vice-Chairman, chairing the meeting), Y Bendle, T Holden, T Spruce, J Overton and J Worley

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors: B Bernard, J Hornby and J Rowe

**Portfolio Holder Present:** Councillor: L Neal

**Officers in Attendance:** The Assistant Director of Individuals and Families (M Pursehouse), the Assistant Director for Regulatory (N Howard), the Assistant Director for Economic Growth (G Denton), the Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager (L Chant), the Senior Environmental Health Officer (Community Protection) (T Garland), the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard) and the Committee Officer (J Hammond)

**Also in Attendance:** Police and Crime Commissioner Giles Orpen-Smellie and Chief Inspector Jason Selvarajah, Deputy District Commander

### **1323 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs B Bernard, J Hornby and J Rowe.

### **1324 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received from members.

### **1325 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 13 October 2022, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 1326 POLICE, CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN

The Chairman welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Giles Orpen-Smellie to the meeting and thanked him for attending the meeting.

PCC Orpen-Smellie presented the Committee with an update on the state of policing in Norfolk, which included some of the following statistics:

- There were 1800 employed officers, with between 200-250 on duty at any time. Approximately 100 of which were on the ground.
- The number of calls received had increased rapidly since Covid:
  - 999 calls increased to around 500 daily
  - 101 calls increased to around 1000 daily
  - 60% of calls were not related to Police matters
- Calls relating to suicide attempts received every 2-3 days
- Number of drug overdoses decreased in the last year– due to the counter drugs effort
- Road incidents over the last year resulted in 39 deaths and 400 injured
- 9 homicides in the last year:
  - 1 drugs/gangs related
  - 3 mental health related
  - 5 domestic violence related
- Wider crime:
  - 24% of crimes were domestic abuse related
  - 2142 reports of rape and sexual assault (which included historic cases)
  - 1322 burglaries reported (Norfolk had the second lowest number of reported burglaries in the country)
- Prosecution rates in Norfolk were 2% higher than the national average (7%)
- Court waiting lists continued to grow. Cases took an average 11-18 months to proceed to court, sometimes longer
- Resources in 2022:
  - Budget of £197 million
    - 55% from Government funding
    - 45% from precepts
  - Spending
    - 86% of funding spent on staff salaries (the 5% officer pay rise was not covered by Government funding and only 4% could be covered by in-year budgets)
    - 14% of funding spent on stations, vehicles, training and equipment

He concluded that Norfolk was a safe county with one of the lowest crime rates despite being the fifth largest county in the country. The public

perception was that speeding and anti-social behaviour were the biggest concerns for the county.

The Assistant Director of Individuals and Families explained that South Norfolk Council had a role to play in reducing the Police demand. He added that whilst there was a strong partnership between the Police and the Council, officers were investigating what further preventative work could be done in collaboration with the Police in order to reduce demand, especially in terms of housing, mental health, domestic violence, and anti-social behaviour. PCC Orpen-Smellie agreed that stronger co-operation and resource sharing was required across all public sector organisations.

Members also noted that mental health issues accounted for approximately 20-25% of issues the Police attended to on a daily basis, and that roughly 20% of on-duty officers were either waiting in queues at A&E or supervising people held in Police suites under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983. Officers advised members that the Council was looking to secure funding to employ additional NHS mental health staff to reduce the impact on Police resources. The Committee agreed that more work was required to ensure that this was addressed and that a multi-agency approach was secured.

In response to a query on the unmanned Police station in Poringland, PCC Orpen-Smellie advised that closures were a result of the austerity programme and funding constraints. He noted there was relatively little footfall in the now unmanned centres. Chief Inspector Jason Selvarajah added that whilst no 'front facing' staff were present at Poringland, there was still a Police presence behind the scenes.

After further discussion, the Chairman thanked PCC Orpen-Smellie for his frank and informative presentation.

It was unanimously

## **RESOLVED**

To receive the Police, Crime and Community Safety Plan.

### **1327 REVIEW OF EARLY INTERVENTION ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OFFICER PILOT SERVICE – REVIEW OF PROGRESS**

The Assistant Director for Regulatory introduced his report, which presented a review of the progress of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer pilot service following its introduction in April 2022.

Members were informed that the planned outcomes of the pilot service were to:

- Gather more early intelligence, identify and tackle root causes of anti-social behaviour in the Council's Regulatory services, in order to produce long-term improvements in neighbour relations and community safety.
- Increase the capacity and drive, speed and impact of the Council's service by taking an early intervention approach to anti-social behaviour and environmental offending.
- Offer stronger visibility and community reassurance.
- Detect better and earlier any wider victimisation, vulnerability and support needs, and safeguarding issues.
- Optimise the deterrence, investigation and enforcement of anti-social behaviour (within the Council's remit) where offences have been committed causing harassment, alarm, distress or environmental harm.
- Test the scope for stronger coordination of responses and tactics for dealing with significant ongoing anti-social behaviour issues and incidents, operating (within the Council's remit) closely alongside Norfolk Constabulary as a key regulatory partner.

The early intervention operating model had proven effective and efficient, as indicated by the results against its success measures. The indications were that this service remodelling and transformation would offer significant benefits to the Council and to local communities.

The added value overall of the early intervention pilot service could be summarised within the following two key benefits:

- Hundreds of cases had been quickly resolved, with sound and accurate background information enabling proportionate responses and quickly completed service delivery meeting the expectations agreed in advance with service users.
- The Community Protection Team was able to focus more time on those cases that needed more in-depth investigation and more formal interventions and enforcement. As a result, the Council could demonstrate a growing body of successful outcomes and – where informal interventions were not complied with – robust enforcement action ranging from written warnings and formal notices to fixed penalty notices and, where necessary, prosecutions.

Strong support for the service had been expressed from several partner agencies. Officers were exploring whether partnership funding could be found to sustain the early intervention service going forward in an extension of the pilot service through 2023-24, enabling a further period of evaluation to focus on the longer-term outcomes.

In answer to a query the Assistant Director for Regulatory informed the meeting that the Community Protection Team had received 1,801 anti-social behaviour complaints in 2018, 1,854 in 2019 and 2,700 in 2020/21, which showed the uplift that the Council had seen. The report highlighted that

during the service's peak month of August this year demand had been 70 percent higher than it was four years ago. On an annual basis there remained a continuing increase in service demand of around 32 percent above pre-Covid levels.

In response to a query about the Team's ability to cope with any further increase in demand on the Service, the Assistant Director for Regulatory informed the meeting that one aim of the pilot service was to enable little and often contact for the lower risk anti-social behaviour cases. This was an adaptable model that would allow for less or more work to be undertaken as was necessary. In 80 percent of cases the issues were resolved with one contact which demonstrated that this model of intervention worked. Overall, the Team had the capacity to manage any further increase in demand by taking a flexible approach within existing resources.

Members felt that public awareness of the scheme needed to be increased. The Assistant Director for Regulatory explained that he was working with the Communications Team to promote the pilot scheme more widely.

One member noted that it was difficult to identify and evaluate the costs associated with early intervention and requested that financial analysis be provided to allow the Committee to assess the value for money of the scheme. The Assistant Director agreed that financial analysis of the scheme would be provided when the scheme was brought back to the Committee for further review.

The Committee thanked officers for the report and welcomed a further review of the scheme in 12 months once further information was available.

After further discussion, it was

## **RESOLVED**

To

1. Receive the review of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer Pilot service to date and note that this matter would be brought back to the Committee once further information was available to evaluate the success of the pilot.
2. Note the success criteria and progress made to achieve them in section 3 of the report.
3. Note the proposed extension of the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer Pilot service to March 2024, subject to funding being secured.

*The Committee adjourned at 10.20am and reconvened at 10.30am, when all the Committee members listed above were present.*

## **1328 REVIEW OF BUSINESS REGULATORY SUPPORT HUB PILOT SERVICE – REVIEW OF PROGRESS**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director for Regulatory which presented a review of the progress of the Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot service following its introduction in January 2022.

Members were informed that the Council's Regulatory Service was responsible for inspecting business compliance and providing support and guidance, as well as enforcement.

The aim of the Business Regulatory Support Hub pilot service was to ensure that businesses had strong pro-active and balanced support for those businesses that the Council had a regulatory relationship with.

One of the planned outcomes of the pilot was to provide a shop window for Council services, including enhanced compliance services such as business start-up support and pre-inspection support.

The pilot tested the potential for the following two elements of service transformation:

- Extending the information and advice offer from the Council's Regulatory services to help businesses to maximise compliance with legal requirements and, as a result, protect the public and consumers.
- Connecting more closely a range of Council services with which businesses engage, so that when businesses contact one of them officers can help those businesses ensure they are fully informed about, and engaging with, others.

Section three of the report included nine success measures for the pilot scheme against which it could be assessed.

Member's attention was drawn to Appendix One to the report, which illustrated the range of contact points that were available to businesses, including licensing, planning, commercial waste, business rates, economic growth and training. The Business Regulatory Support Hub would act as a link to all these services when a start-up business first contacted the Council.

It was intended to seek £32,000 in external funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund, to allow an extension of the pilot to March 2024, in order to evaluate the scheme against the planned outcomes.

In response to a query, the Assistant Director noted that the scheme was in its infancy and requested that the scheme be brought back to the Committee in 12 months once more hard data was available.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth commended the scheme, which would provide a singular source for support to businesses. She was confident that the data gathered over the next 12 months would demonstrate the importance and value of the scheme.

It was then

## **RESOLVED**

To

1. Receive the review on the progress of the Business Regulatory Support Hub Pilot service, and to note that this matter would be brought back to the Committee once further information was available to evaluate the success of the pilot.
2. Note the proposed extension of the Business Regulatory Support Hub Pilot up to March 2024 subject to confirmation of temporary Shared Prosperity Fund funding to enable longer pilot delivery, testing and evaluation.

## **1329 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME, TRACKER AND CABINET CORE AGENDA**

The Committee noted the Work Programme, Tracker and Cabinet Core Agenda.

Members were reminded that reviews of both the Early Intervention Anti-Social Behaviour Officer Pilot Service and the Business Regulatory Support Hub Pilot Services was due to be brought to the Committee in November 2023.

The Senior Governance Officer advised members of a report on Cost-of-Living support that was due to be brought before Cabinet at its meeting on 5 December. It was agreed that the Committee review this topic in 12 months.

The Committee felt that a more specific update on the Police, Crime and Community Safety Plan was required. It was requested that Liam Bannon be invited to a future meeting to provide an update on the plan.

(The meeting concluded at 11.52am)

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Chairman