

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **North Northumberland Local Area Council** held at St. James' Church Centre, Alnwick, NE66 1JW on Thursday, 19 December 2019 at 4.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor G Castle (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

G Hill	G Roughead
W Pattison	C Seymour
G Renner-Thompson	T Thorne

OFFICERS

E Beniams	Senior Community Safety Officer
M Bird	Senior Democratic Services Officer
G Gavin	Head of Neighbourhood Services
T Palmer	Head of Procurement Shared Service

Also in attendance:

R Gray, S Knight, J Swan, S Vickers, S Wilmore-Greaves (all Northumbria Police)
Press: 1, public: 3

101. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bridgett, Clark, Lawrie, Moore, Murray and Watson. The Chair passed on best wishes sent from Councillor Watson to all as he was unable to attend due to a recent accident. Members sent best wishes for his recovery.

102. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of North Northumberland Local Area Council held on Thursday, 21 November 2019, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

103. POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

The item was introduced by Inspector John Swan, who firstly provided a verbal overview about the new force operating model introduced from 4 November 2019 which changed the approach to policing and allocation of resources. This included a greater police presence in rural parts of the county and an increase in '24/7' resources. It was intended that police would attend more town/parish councils where possible to hear about local issues; as policing was intelligence led, communities could pass on information and police resources could then be allocated where needed. Work also took place with police forces in Scotland and Cumbria.

Other police officers in attendance provided a further overview of policing in various parts of north Northumberland, of which the key points were:

- a recent increase in antisocial behaviour in Amble, for which dispersal notices had been issued and additional resources allocated. Support and safeguarding had been arranged for a Syrian family who had experienced antisocial behaviour and hate crime
- crime had dropped in the North Broomhill area, but the statistics were skewed by the location of the nearby prison
- in the Alnwick and east coast policing area, violence against the person/theft and hate crime rates had increased, but vehicular crime was down. Issues in Alnwick were low level crime and antisocial behaviour, shop theft and drugs, and issues in Rothbury were theft, poaching and speeding
- work continued to target underage drinking and issues with any licensed premises. There was close work with the licensing officer, which included some reviews of existing licences
- volunteers were always welcome to assist with community speed watch initiatives
- work to address shoplifting and checks at public houses in Berwick had an impact
- enlisting volunteers for work addressing rural crime and poaching assisted the police to target resources where needed.

Key points from questions from members and responses from police officers then included:

Police attendance at town/parish council meetings would be organised where possible depending on officers availability within their shifts, or alternatively parish councils could send their concerns by email. A member added that in the past some parish councils did not have police attendance despite having a standing item on their agendas. Members were advised that this was previously due to resources, but they would now in a better position to attend more meetings.

Further to comments about an impact on Northumberland from the nationally promised 20,000 additional police officers, members were advised that they could just comment on local arrangements currently, including the impact from the new arrangements for studying for a degree in policing and the two year programme for graduates to become qualified officers.

In response to a question, members were informed that the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner had been involved in much work in Northumberland including rural crime and policing including Operational Checkpoint and also work to attract more volunteers in rural areas.

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A member referred to a news item about the Metropolitan Police screening out half of all their reported crimes within 24 hours; was this also due to resources and were the equivalent figures available for Northumbria Police? Members were advised that every crime reported was investigated, but proportionate investigations were allocated for each, in a similar method to NHS triaging. Police officers asked the necessary questions in response to calls made, but if cases were not supported by any evidence, such as CCTV footage and witnesses, they would need to be closed off.

A member queried what action was taken in response to minor theft from shops. Members were advised that such shops would be sent a retail pack which they could fill in and return to the police, but it would not usually warrant the police attending the scene. If the offender was known to the police already, it would be investigated proportionately. Police could also offer a telephone call where appropriate. If new evidence was found in relation to closed crimes, investigations would begin again. The police now took a smarter approach to tackling crime rather than the previous practice of automatically visiting premises and publishing newspaper notices for seeking witnesses.

A member asked whether the public considered the monitoring of public houses to be as high a priority for the police as indicated? Members were advised that it was important, as for example underage drinking was a licensing offence, might lead to drink driving or being chauffeured by friends. Many young people often preloaded with alcohol at home before drinking in public, and alcohol abuse could have a wider impact on local communities such as broken bottles, noise and fights/violence.

A member drew attention to public perception and residents' greater sense of security resulting from a higher police presence. Members were advised that previously Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) only operated in towns, but were now also based in more rural areas. In response to a question it was confirmed that the strength/quality of drugs found was not tested; tackling drug use in rural areas relied on detecting possession, which should be assisted by a greater police presence.

In response to a question, members were advised that the opening hours of police stations remained the same as in the previous force model, but the same presence was no longer needed as all police constables had access to all the required technology whether at stations or in communities.

A copy of the single point of access document would be shared with all members of the Local Area Council.

Senior Community Safety Officer Emma Beniams then provided a verbal community safety update; the North Northumberland Local Area Council's area was covered by three Victim, Offender or Location (VOL) areas and three police sectors - Alnwick, Berwick & Morpeth. In January 2019 the VOL arrangements were reviewed and changes implemented to improve partnership involvement and consistency across all areas. As a result, all VOLs were now attended by a wider range of agencies which allowed for a more holistic approach to issues affecting the local community. All VOLs were now also chaired by the Senior Community Safety Officer which ensured an overview of all issues across the County including those that crossed VOL boundaries, sharing of best practice and efficient use of resources. Issues that were discussed at

VOL meetings were those that had an impact on the local community and required a multi agency response where a single agency had been unable to resolve the matter. Although there was an increase in reports in the current year compared to the previous one, this was consistent across the country and not unique to north Northumberland.

The most common complaint across north Northumberland for community safety was rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour with 20 complaints in 2018-19 and 19 so far this year. This tended to concern behaviour at home addresses that spilled out and affected neighbours or groups/individuals in public places. 19 complaints had been received so far in the current year regarding intimidation or harassment. Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 powers had been used where appropriate.

Community Protection Warnings and Notices were designed to protect the public when behaviour was having a detrimental impact on those in the locality where this was persistent and continuing. One had been served on a couple in Berwick following complaints of harassing neighbours which later led to a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO). No community trigger applications had been received in the current year. A closure order had been secured the previous week by the Antisocial Behaviour team for a property in Alnwick.

Public Protection had a pool of rapid deployable CCTV units available for use on a temporary basis for emerging issues of antisocial behaviour or low level crime. One unit deployed in the Berwick area and two had recently been removed from Amble. All three were as a result of vulnerable residents being targeted by unknown persons at their home addresses. Currently Public Spaces Protection Orders were in place regarding antisocial street drinking in most local towns. The current orders needed to be reviewed and either renewed or revoked by October 2020; this process had started and liaison would take place with police colleagues in order to evidence what course of action was required for each area.

In response to concerns about speeding vehicles, members were advised to contact the local police team or Ms Beniams to pass on concerns.

Ms Beniams, Ms Gray, Mr Knight, Mr Swan, Ms Vickers, Ms Wilmore-Greaves were thanked for their attendance and it was:

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

104. PETITIONS

A report had been circulated to members which responded to a petition requesting improvements to the bridleway from South Lane, North Sunderland to the Primary School and Nursery Side Gate, Seahouses.

Lead petitioner Krzysztof Skibicki was in attendance and introduced his petition. His key points included concerns about the condition of the path as it was used by parents and children attending the school and nursery - accidents had occurred as the surface was unsuitable for bikes and pushchairs; the main route to the school along the main street took up to 15-20 minutes longer for some residents - some parents drove to the school instead as a result and this only made the problem worse leading to complaints

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from local residents about people parking in front of their houses; the school's headteacher had proposed some planting around the path; and he also queried if any lighting could be erected along the path.

Councillor Jeff Stewart, chair of North Sunderland and Seahouses Parish Council also spoke in support of the petitioners' request. He provided a background to the development of Harker Court in the 1980s and a missed opportunity for modifying the bridle path at the time. He further referred to concerns about parking, surface water issues, the need to upgrade the condition of the Lonnen, and local residents' vehicular access needs.

Councillor Renner-Thompson also spoke as local county councillor for the area also referred to a previous officer view that the bridleway was sufficient, but not for access for families. The Lonnen needed upgrading and the proposed £50,000 Local Transport Plan (LTP) contribution would be welcomed. It was also important to ensure vehicular access only for residents to address parking problems caused by parents dropping off their children.

Head of Neighbourhood Services Greg Gavin then introduced the report. Although the surface had been considered suitable for a bridleway, a tarmac surface would better suit the majority of its users. It was estimated this would cost between £40,000 - £50,000. As there was not a specific budget for this work, a contribution from the 2020/21 LTP budget was proposed. Liaison would take place with the local parish council and county councillor about the design for the scheme. He added that there was no proposal to also erect lighting along the path.

Members noted that this Local Area Council would be formally consulted about the proposed LTP programme for 2020/21 at their meeting on 21 February 2020, before the programme was formally agreed in March 2020 for the following financial year. The report's recommendation was unanimously supported so it was thus:

RESOLVED that officers be requested to bring forward a scheme of improvements to the path to ensure that the path surface meets the needs of all path users including those taking children to and from school with buggies and children on bicycles, by providing a suitably drained sealed surface path.

105. NORTHUMBERLAND LOTTERY

Members received a presentation from Teresa Palmer, Head of Procurement Shared Services, which provided an overview and understanding of the operation of the Northumberland Lottery. (Copy of the presentation filed with the signed minutes.)

Key details included how ticket sales would fund good causes, the eligibility requirements for local charities which participated, how people could pick their lottery numbers, and restrictions on limiting the purchase of tickets to 20 per person at each draw. The presentation also included a demonstration of a live lottery website for another local authority. A timetable was provided with the next steps which included raising awareness of the lottery within the voluntary and community sector and launch of tickets sales to members of the public in March 2020. Regular updates would be

presented to the Council's Corporate Resources and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A member queried if any organisations which did not qualify as charities but distributed their profits could be eligible to participate? Members were advised that any such cases could be considered on their merits as there would be some flexibility in the guidelines.

In response to further questions, it was confirmed that:

- Australian Lottery numbers were used, which were drawn on Saturdays
- officers were confident that the proposal did not encourage gambling as the prizes and odds of winning were not high enough to encourage serious gamblers
- over 60 local authorities in the UK were operating such lotteries
- colleagues at a number of other local authorities had confirmed that their lotteries had been well received.

Members welcomed the additional funding that would be generated for local good causes. Ms Palmer was thanked for her attendance and it was:

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

106. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 23 January 2020 at St. James' Church Centre, Alnwick.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____