
OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

Purpose of Report

1. The following were the main areas of work under my Community and Public Protection Portfolio:

Support Service for People Affected by Domestic Abuse

2. The Supporting People Team has successfully awarded a contract for the delivery of a housing related support service for people affected by domestic abuse. The Council's Supporting People five-year strategy identified the priority need for a Floating Support Service. Although refuge facilities and generic support services already exist in Darlington, there were no specialist housing related support services for people who wanted to remain in their own home, or who were leaving the refuge to set up a home in Darlington.
3. This service will provide much needed support to vulnerable people in their homes who have been affected by domestic abuse, including men and members of same-sex relationships.
4. A service specification was drafted in consultation with the Domestic Abuse Forum and the Supporting People Core Strategy Development Group, and the Commissioning Body identified sufficient resources from the Supporting People grant for the service. Following a tendering exercise, the contract was awarded to Carr Gomm, who already operate other successful housing related support services for vulnerable people in Darlington. The service is due to commence in August 2007 and will enable up to 25 people at any one time to access support to help them maintain their tenancies.
5. The service will run alongside existing services for people affected by domestic abuse. The provision of this new service will play a crucial role in meeting the Darlington Domestic Abuse Action Plan's strategic aim to "reduce the incidents of domestic abuse by improving the mechanisms dealing with the identification of, the reporting of and the support services for victims".

Tees Valley Sub-Regional Housing and Ship 3

6. Darlington Borough Council have been actively working with its four Tees Valley local authority partners and Tees Valley Living to assemble a range of housing projects in anticipation of the forthcoming SHIP3 bidding round for Regional Housing Board funding for 2008-11. The costed Tees Valley Sub-Regional Action Plan incorporates a wide range of innovative initiatives across all housing tenures. The range of projects will support housing choice, access to housing, affordability, housing decency, energy efficiency improvements and the provision of disabled adaptations in the private sector. The project proposals will be submitted to the Regional Housing Board by the end of July 2007 and at this point will be subject to assessment and scrutiny. Announcements of respective funding allocations are not likely until the beginning of 2008.

Internal Planned Maintenance - Lascelles Park

7. As part of a rolling programme of major work to all the blocks of flats at Lascelles Park, a block of 12 flats at Rockcliffe House was recently extensively refurbished and remodelled and is now fully occupied. Security has been significantly improved with new door entry systems, robust fencing and new bin stores being provided. Work has commenced on the final block of 18 flats at Kilburn House and is expected to take 6 months. This will mean that all the larger blocks of flats on the estate have either been demolished and redeveloped into family housing or extensively remodelled. Work to transform the sheltered housing scheme at Rosemary Court into an Extra Care Scheme is progressing well and the scheme is scheduled to open in September 2007 to provide 38 flats for independent living for older people with care needs and four units for intermediate care.

Responsive Maintenance

8. Another phase of mobile working for the Repairs and Maintenance Service has been introduced. Gas Service Engineers in Building Services now receive their annual gas service instructions and appointments via the handheld technology. Computer systems have been developed to replace previous manual systems for managing this important area of work to ensure the annual gas servicing of nearly 5,000 properties. The system issues letters and reminders as well as tracking the work undertaken.

New Partnering Arrangements

9. Three external partners have now been appointed to undertake maintenance and improvement works to Council properties. The contracts are for a five year period to maximise value for money with an option to extend by a further two years. The contracts cover internal planned maintenance, environmental improvements and painting works. Members of the Tenants Board have played an active part in the appointment of the partners, evaluating the organisations' submissions and meeting formally with them to ask challenging questions of each partner. Board members were particularly interested in how the partners would ensure high levels of customer satisfaction, issues of site safety, how home visits would be undertaken and issues of identification, the quality of service and performance monitoring. The Tenants Board are to carry out Mystery Shopping on future programmes of work and their findings will be used to monitor overall performance.

Anti Social Behaviour/Warden Service

10. As a result of the Street Safe initiative using our newly available powers under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, the following have been undertaken:
 - (a) Litter clearance notices served in Northgate, Darlington. This was to enforce clear ups to the rear of the food takeaway outlets that are displaying an unacceptable level of refuse to the rear, which had been set on fire previously and was attracting vermin.
 - (b) Fixed penalties issued to two car dealers for exposing vehicles for sale at the roadside resulting in obstructed footpaths.

Bartlett Street Crack House Closure and Injunction

11. Due to ongoing anti social behaviour and drug activity, the Anti Social Behaviour Team worked alongside the Police executed a warrant on 14 February 2007. Evidence of class A drugs were found and Aycliffe Magistrates Court issued a Crack House Closure Order, which enabled the landlord to board up the property for a period of three months. In April 2007, the landlord evicted the tenants permanently. In order to prevent the family moving back into Bartlett Street and causing further distress to residents, injunctions were gained to prevent the occupants from returning to the street for the next two years.

First Obstruction Case

12. A resident of Pease Street, Darlington attended Court on 26 April 2007 to plead guilty to a littering offence. The resident, who failed to provide the Uniformed Warden with the correct details, was fined £60 for the littering offence and £50 for obstructing an officer and was ordered to pay costs of £70.

Vehicle Crime

13. A dedicated team to tackle Vehicle Crime has been created. The team consists of 3 PC's who are briefed on a daily basis and given ownership of all vehicle related crime investigations. They also target the top ten suspects with a view to gathering intelligence, carrying out surveillance and raising the awareness of all partners. The team has obtained 5 CRASBO's on identified key offenders and another 6 individuals have served terms of imprisonment. In addition a further 6 CRASBO applications are pending court with a further 8 in preparation.
14. Awareness Raising – the partnership invested significant resources in raising the issue of Vehicle Crime within the Borough. A variety of media channels were utilised including a radio campaign, local press, the Council's monthly Town Crier magazine, publicity on parking tickets and on local bus networks. In addition, at least two messages per week are sent to over 1345 residents via the "crime ring" and Neighbourhood Watch.
15. Over 400 Smartwater kits were used to mark valuables and in excess of 2,800 leaflets and stickers were distributed.

Violent Crime

16. The re-alignment of Police and Uniformed Warden shift patterns to maximise resources at peak times has resulted in higher visibility in key locations. Further work is ongoing in regards to this to ensure a consistent approach to the night time economy.
17. Multi agency visits have been carried out at licensed premises developing relations with licensees.

Theft

18. Regular input at Brownies and Cubs has taken place with an aim to engage and empower young people to earn a Crime Reduction badge.
19. Through existing Neighbourhood Watch contacts ultra violet marking kits were made available, including registration cards providing the opportunity to record serial numbers.

Criminal Damage

20. A formal warning scheme has been developed in conjunction with the ASB Team to work with those involved in Criminal Damage.
21. As part of Darlington's LAA a range of environmental projects have started to be developed with the voluntary sector as part of the "Young Caretakers" initiative which aims to get young people involved in improving the area in which they live.
22. In conjunction with the Voluntary Sector the "Pride in Your Street" initiative started and is currently being rolled out. Similar to Neighbourhood Watch the scheme will engage residents in addressing environmental crime issues.

Burglary

23. 200 Smartwater kits were issued to victims and potential victims of burglary.
24. Operation Darc, which is run annually, was implemented to address the early-evening burglaries that occur during the winter months.
25. Neighbourhood Watch has continued to grow with 1400 active members now registered.
26. Shed Safe initiatives have been carried out across hotpot areas of the Borough with residents able to purchase garage/shed alarms and dusk till dawn lights at a discounted rate.
27. A Bogus Officials Awareness raining event was held with over 150 individuals attending.

Darlington Drug and Alcohol Action Team

28. The County Durham and Darlington Harm Reduction Strategy has been published with a conference to launch the document on 20 June 2007.
29. Government News Network the Home Office media agency is working with the DAAT Partnership to deliver positive messages through the media in relation to drugs and alcohol as part of the Government's "Changing Lives Making Communities Safer" media campaign.

Alcohol

30. Darlington Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy has now been firmly set within a planning framework. Action plans have been developed based on local and regional priorities and partners engaged within delivery.
31. Needs assessment is now a high priority with work focussing on the collection of data from across the partnership to identify need and set local baselines from which to measure performance.
32. Adult alcohol treatment remains the biggest gap in provision. A lack of success in any ring fenced alcohol finance has meant that partners are now contingency planning to try and create a treatment service by trying to promote improved working of what we already have.
33. The national brief intervention research "Trail Blazers" has identified Darlington as a pilot site with projects within Accident and Emergency, Primary Care and a criminal justice setting as yet unspecified

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