

**COUNCIL
18 JULY 2024**

OVERVIEW OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council the updates for the Stronger Communities Portfolio are as follows:

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

2. Reporting parameters in relation to crime and ASB have changed over recent years, which has meant it is difficult to secure a like for like comparisons between years. The most recent changes should have nearly worked through the system meaning these figures are becoming more comparable. However, there can be more changes to reporting parameters and this needs to be monitored.

Local Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Trends – Darlington

Darlington	YTD May 2023	YTD May 2024
Crime	2197	1928
ASB	406	437

3. The combined total of Crime and ASB across Darlington has reduced by a total of 238 incidents when compared to the previous year.
4. The areas of crime showing an increase include burglary, vehicle crime and shoplifting. The Police, together with partners have responded through crime prevention campaigns, dedicated and additional patrols, proactive operations, use of criminal powers and targeting suspects which has resulted in arrests. The combination of these activities is seeing reductions relating to burglary and vehicle crime.
5. Areas showing a current increase in ASB include the Town Centre and North Road. Partners have increased patrols in these areas, targeted offenders and identified several individuals who are now subject of further investigation and intervention by the relevant services.

Local Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Trends – Darlington Town Centre

Darlington Town Centre	YTD May 2023	YTD May 2024
Crime	264	260
ASB	24	47

6. The combined total of Crime and ASB across Darlington town centre has increased by a total of 19 incidents when compared to the previous year.
7. Reported crime has remained relatively static. However, the areas of crime showing an increase include violence against the person, sexual offences, burglary and racially aggravated crime.

8. There is a relatively increase in ASB, which equates to an increase of 24 incidents. Working with partners we are analysing the data to determine any specific patterns or intervention requirements and will monitor this trend closely. Since the last reporting period:
 - (a) 3 young people received first warnings for ASB
 - (b) 4 young people received acceptable behaviour agreements (ABA)
 - (c) 5 committed ABA breaches
 - (d) 4 young people were referred to Darlington Borough Council Young Peoples Engagement and Justice Service for positive intervention
 - (e) 1 young person is pending assessment
9. There are currently 13 young people about to successfully complete the first cohort (ten-week programme) of the Future Pathways intervention programmes since restart.

Operational Updates

Environmental Crime

10. Since the last reporting period officers have continued to tackle problems associated with fly-tipping and waste in back lanes, the figures below provide an overview of activity:
 - (a) 31 environmental cases have been received (of which 22 have been closed)
 - (b) 1 successful prosecution (fail to assist investigation)
 - (c) 1 case file submitted to legal (fail to assist investigation).
 - (d) 1 Fixed Penalty Notice issued (Breach of Community Protection Notice)
 - (e) 1 Community Protection Notice issued
 - (f) 7 Community Protection Warnings issued

Community Resilience

11. "Prevent" is one part of the Government's Counter-Terrorism strategy "Contest". The Council went through a Home Office benchmarking process for Local Authorities delivering Prevent and this demonstrated significant progress. Out of the seven benchmarks the council 'exceeded' delivery outcomes in five and 'met' delivery outcomes in the remaining two.
12. Channel is part of the prevent agenda and aimed at protecting vulnerable people being drawn into terrorism. The annual 'Channel Panel Assurance Statement' was submitted to the Home Office. This statement captures local authority compliance with the duty and demonstrated we 'fully met' 23 out of 24 criteria and we 'mostly met' the remaining one.
13. The 'Emergency Services Day' was held in the Market this provided an opportunity for engagement with members of the public, explain their roles, encourage reporting and answer questions on issues such as anti-social behaviour, car parking, XL bullies. The event showcased the strong partnerships between the Council and emergency service partners.
14. Number Forty now has a designated co-ordinator and 41 volunteers helping support the community. Recent developments include:

- (a) additional training focusing on 'First Contact techniques', Safeguarding and Naxolone use/awareness;
- (b) the introduction and operation of two 'Street Friends' on a Friday and Saturday evening. 'Street Friends' proactively engage with those in the Town Centre providing intervention, support and care wherever necessary.
- (c) provision of a screen at the front of the premises which promotes relevant safety and health advice, and
- (d) integration with Housing and Public Health colleagues especially around improved information exchange, which is resulting in speedier solutions being identified for most service users.

Licensing and Trading Standards

- 15. Uber have applied for an Operator's licence in Darlington. This is being presently being processed. Uber vehicles from Stockton and Durham can already be seen in Darlington as they can lawfully take cross border bookings.
- 16. Two further successful prosecutions of unlicensed dog breeders have taken place. They were found guilty at Peterlee Magistrates Court and the cases were adjourned for reports before sentencing.
- 17. The defendant in the case of Operation Stallion which relates to trademark offences involving counterfeit watches has pleaded guilty to ten charges under the Trade Marks Act. A sentencing hearing is scheduled.
- 18. Partnership work continues to tackle the supply of illegal cigarettes and vapes, with a focus on the wider impacts of this illegal activity. A three-month premises closure order was granted by Peterlee Magistrates Court in relation to a Darlington Town Centre store namely Magic Vape on Tubwell Row.
- 19. Trading Standards have signed up to the National Scambusters team and been able to return money to two elderly victims of fraudulent mail scams. Their mail had been intercepted by the National team and Trading Standards were able to re-unite these victims with at least some of their money. When returning this money Trading Standards have been able to offer advice on how these types of frauds work and how to avoid them.
- 20. People selling counterfeit goods in the town centre have been targeted by CCTV. Joint working between Civic Enforcement, Police and Trading Standards resulted in the goods being seized, sending a clear message that this illegal activity will not be tolerated and we will take action to protect consumers and legitimate traders.
- 21. Shopwatch Members met in the Dolphin Centre and participants were provided with "welcome packs" and they were briefed members on current developments around retail crime. Matters discussed included personal safety, reporting procedures, youth engagement referrals for young people causing nuisance within retail areas and problem-solving around those begging and sleeping rough.

22. Reports of begging have increased and a series of actions are progressing. The inclusion of the Integrated Management Unit of the police to manage those people who continue to beg, despite all forms of support, coaching and advice is proving beneficial. A new communication plan involving the provision of posters has also been produced to tackle the problems associated with begging in the town centre.

Councillor Dr Amanda Riley
Stronger Communities Portfolio