

## **OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Community Safety Portfolio.

### **Crime and Disorder**

2. There has been a four per cent decrease in the number of reported crimes during the period 1 April to 20 November 2018 compared to the same period in 2017. This equates to a reduction of 369 crimes. Crimes showing an increase include: violence without injury (disorder), harassment and possession of weapons. Crimes showing a significant decrease include: theft, burglary and vehicle crime.
3. The increase in crimes relating to violence and harassment is attributable to certain types of anti-social behaviour now being recorded as crimes and also compliance with national recording standards, which now requires certain crimes to be recorded which were previously not recorded as such.
4. The increase in the possession of weapons is 36 per cent which equates to 49 crimes compared to 36 in a previous period. These offences are currently under review to determine any further action.
5. Whilst Darlington is currently showing a decrease in reported crime there are increases elsewhere in the Durham Constabulary area, with figures ranging from four per cent in East Durham to nine per cent in West Durham.
6. Darlington has also experienced a seven per cent decrease in all reported incidents to the police during the same period and anti-social behaviour is currently 14 per cent lower than last year.
7. Exceptions relating to increases in anti-social behaviour include Northgate which is up 22 per cent and Eastbourne which is showing an increase of 17 per cent when compared to similar periods last year.
8. Darlington Community Partnership and the Multi-Agency Problem Solving Group are currently working together to tackle these issues and have developed and completed a number of operations, initiatives and time limited work to reduce crime and disorder in the areas of exception.

### **Civic Enforcement Service**

### **Youth Referral, Intervention and Diversion Programme**

9. Since 1 January 2017, 627 people (507 young people and 120 adults) have been referred to Darlington Borough Council Civic Enforcement Service and Youth Offending Service for intervention and diversionary activities. Of the total number, 627 have received official warnings, 66 have been issued with Acceptable Behaviour Agreements and four Criminal Behaviour Orders have been

granted by the Youth Court. The rate of recidivism (i.e. reoffending) is 10.76 per cent which is significantly below the national figure which is over three times higher.

### **Community Engagement Programme - MutualGain**

10. Durham Constabulary and partners, including Darlington Borough Council, local Councillors and members of the community are currently completing a programme of activity designed to increase social capital and reduce dependency on local services in Bank Top. The programme, facilitated by MutualGain, recently held a special event at Eastbourne Community Centre to focus on a number of local improvements around litter, dog fouling, motorcycle nuisance, local parkland and quality of life in the area. Around 40 local residents attended the event and a number of key actions were agreed for further development in early 2019.

### **Town Centre Begging**

11. A multi-agency problem solving group involving Darlington Borough Council Community Safety, Town Centre Partnership, Housing Options, Police, the 700 Club and NECA have recently developed a strategy to tackle begging in Darlington. The strategy, which is supported by an action plan, has four key strands including empathy, engagement, education and enforcement. All members are now actively supporting the plan which will address the challenges and complexities surrounding begging and homelessness in Darlington.

### **'Have A Heart Give Smart' Campaign**

12. The 'Have a Heart Give Smart' campaign was launched on 14 December 2018. The campaign aims to educate and inform members of the public against giving cash to an individual who is begging as they could be contributing towards a person's vulnerabilities. As an alternative, members of the public are advised to donate to the 700 Club who fund specialist workers to engage and support these individuals.
13. The initiative seeks to raise awareness by encouraging conversations around the issues of homelessness, rough sleeping and street begging, in addition to educating the public about public safety and security, as well as the role of local service providers.

### **Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)**

14. Members of the Cabinet are shortly to consider the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order in a designated area of Darlington Town Centre. The order, if granted, will provide additional powers for Police, Police Community Support and Civic Enforcement Officers to effectively tackle the detrimental issues of alcohol related disorders, begging and youth nuisance. A report, which includes the detail of a three month consultation period, will be made available to Cabinet to support the decision-making process.

### **Trading Standards**

15. On 11 December 2018, a local trader received a written warning from Trading Standards following the seizure of a quantity of suspected illegal tobacco products from his business premises in August 2018. The trader signed possession of the

tobacco products over to Trading Standards for disposal.

16. One of Trading Standard's most recent service messages was 'Don't toy with your child's safety' which offered advice on how to avoid buying fake and unsafe toys this Christmas. Shortly after the message was published in the November 2018 edition of the One Darlington magazine, in local publications and through social media, Trading Standards received a complaint about toys offered for sale, which resulted in a trader receiving advice.

## **Private Sector Housing**

### **Warmer Homes Funding Application**

17. Darlington, along with the other four Tees Valley Councils, are submitting a bid for Warmer Homes Funding. The funding is available for Councils and other organisations to deliver heating and energy efficiency improvements. If grant funding is awarded in March 2019, this will enable the Council to pay for installing gas central heating to those who don't have heating and are in most the most need. Residents living in certain areas across the Borough will qualify automatically if they do not already have a heating system. A gas supply will be required and in some cases this will be paid for from grant funding. Residents living elsewhere will qualify for heating if they meet certain criteria, such as having a low income. Other heating options will be available for properties without a gas supply, especially for those living in rural off gas areas.
18. This is an excellent opportunity to continue to improve housing conditions and reduce fuel poverty and hardship. Owner-occupiers and those who are privately renting will be able to apply for heating improvements. The project in Darlington will be managed by the Council's Private Sector Housing Team and Stockton Council will be the lead Council to receive funding and oversee project delivery, if successful.

## **PREVENT**

### **Contest (Counter Terrorism) Strategy (Regional Forum)**

19. I, as Portfolio Holder, and the Community Resilience Officer, recently attended the second Regional Forum of Prevent at Hartlepool Council on 16 November 2018. The Prevent Forum brings together elected members and Prevent leads from across the North East region. The Forum, supported by the Home Office and Local Government Association, provided attendees with a series of updates relating to Prevent, Channel, Operation Dovetail, cyber awareness, good practice and future training events.

### **Orcuma (First) Mapping Package**

20. Darlington Borough Council is currently working with Durham County Council, Durham Constabulary, Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue and Orcuma to introduce and develop a mapping package which displays crime and ASB data throughout Darlington and County Durham. The package, which went 'live' in Darlington on 14 December 2018, will support the effective deployment of multi-agency resources to focus on areas of threat and risk.

## **Taxi Operation**

21. The Licensing department has received a significant increase in calls regarding out of town taxi companies operating illegally in Darlington. In response to this, the Licensing department commenced a joint operation with officers from Durham Police over the Christmas period. The operation concentrated on known hotspots and reassured Darlington taxi companies that offenders were being targeted.

## **The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018**

22. The introduction of the above regulations has had a significant impact on the Licensing team. The legislation was hastily introduced in September 2018 and came into force in October 2018. The licensing team has worked hard since that time to deal with all applications to date.

23. I have also :-

- (a) carried out a morning shift with our PSCO on 4 December, 2018;
- (b) carried out a night shift with the Police Response Team on 10 December, 2018;
- (c) attended the launch of the Have a Heart Campaign on 14 December, 2018;
- (d) attended a meeting of the Combined Fire Authority on 18 December, 2018;
- (e) attended a meeting of the Police Crime Panel on 10 January, 2019; and
- (f) attended a meeting of the 700 Club on 15 January, 2019

**Councillor Helen Crumbie  
Community Safety Portfolio**