

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 28 August 2025

PRESENT – Councillors McGill (Chair), Cossins, Coe, Mrs Culley, M Nicholson and Snedker.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Keir, Walters and Dr. Riley.

ABSENT – Councillor Mahmud.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors McCollom and Garner (Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Anthony Hewitt (Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects), James McAllister (Democratic Officer), Chris Knox (Head of Community Safety) and Branch (CCTV & Security Control Centre Manager).

CLS7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Coe declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item No. 5 on the Agenda, as he occasionally undertakes work with Number 40 as a self-employed Event Medic.

CLS8 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 12 JUNE 2025

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 12 June 2025.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 12 June 2025 be approved as a correct record.

CLS9 DEPLOYABLE CAMERA POLICY

The Assistant Director, Environmental Services and Community Safety, submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided Members with an overview of the policy and guidelines on issues involved in the planning for, and actual deployment of the Council's re-deployable (mobile) CCTV cameras (RCCTV).

The CCTV & Security Control Centre Manager spoke to this report, and provided a short synopsis of the Council's current deployment of deployable cameras deployed by request on the boundaries of the Borough.

The CCTV & Security Control Centre Manager informed Members that the use of surveillance is not a cure to civic enforcement issues, but is more so utilised as a preventative and aiding tool.

The CCTV & Security Control Centre Manager went into further detail on the policy by which deployable cameras are utilised, and demonstrated the Council's compliance with such regulations.

Members thanked The CCTV & Security Control Centre Manager for speaking to this report, and first questioned whether all deployable cameras at the Councils disposal are being actively utilised to ensure that the Council is maximising its available resources. The CCTV & Security Control Centre Manager answered stating that not all deployable cameras are currently active, and Members asked what the barriers are preventing this. The CCTV & Security Control Centre Manager responded by outlining the lengthy application process, alluded to the resources required to deploy each camera, safeguarding and practicality issues in certain areas, and the procedures required to deploy cameras that have prevented the usage of all available deployable cameras.

Focus then turned to the subject of applications, specifically who an apply for a deployable camera, and the process of doing so. Members were informed that the usual procedure is that a Councillor will make a request to the anti-social or park management team who will consider the request and determine whether a camera will be deployed. The CCTV & Security Control Centre Manager also noted that lack of applications for deployable cameras is a contributing factor for their lack of deployment.

RESOLVED – That the contents of this report be noted.

CLS10 PUBLIC SAFETY OVERVIEW REPORT

Following a request from the Vice-Chair at the annual briefing of this Scrutiny Committee, the Assistant Director, Environmental Services and Community Safety, submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided members with an overview of the ways in which the Council and its partners supports public safety across the Borough. Particular emphasis was placed the areas of Public Safety that members wished to receive more information on, particularly from a community safety perspective; namely the nighttime economy, events and partnership working.

The Head of Community Safety spoke to this report and began by discussing the risk management protocols undertaken by the Council and the Partnerships it works alongside to effectively manage those risks. This was outlined in the context of a current ongoing issue in the Town, which members posed questions upon and were answered by officers.

The Head of Community Safety also made reference to the Local Resilience Forum, the Darlington Community Safety Partnership, the Public Event Safety Advisory Group, Civic Enforcement, CCTV, and Licencing – demonstrating how all of such services contribute to Community Safety in the Borough.

Focus was then diverted to the Nighttime Economy, specifically on the actions undertaken by Number Forty and the future of this establishment. The Head of Community Safety discussed the origins of Number Forty and the expiry date for funding from the Home Office. The Head of Community Safety noted that volunteers are sparse currently, and that efforts are being made to drive engagement and garner volunteers.

Members then asked questions regarding the nature of incidents reported to Number Forty, and whether incident reporting had decreased as a result of less activity in the Nighttime Economy. The Head of Community Safety responded, stating that both less footfall and improved safety control have contributed to a decline in incident reporting.

Members drew a close to this area of discussion by questioning the current priorities outlined on page 29 of the submitted report, issues regarding inflatables, and whether the Civic Enforcement Team is taking a proactive approach to Community Safety.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

CLS11 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS YEAR END - QUARTER 4 - 2024/2025

The Head of Culture, the Assistant Director for Environmental Services and Public Safety, the Assistant Director for Highways and Capital Projects, and the Standards and Animal Health Manager collaborated to produce and submit a report (previously circulated) regarding the Performance Indicators Year End – Quarter 4 – 2024/25 for their service area. This report provided Members with performance data against key performance indicators for 2024/25 up to year end March 2025 (Quarter 4).

The Assistant Director for Highways and Capital Projects spoke to this report, and outlined the performance for Cultural institutions such as the Hippodrome, Hopetown, and the library. The Performance of Community Services, Community Safety, Trading Standards and Animal Health, and Highways and Capital Projects were also discussed.

The Assistant Director for Highways and Capital Projects summarised the report and the overall performance of the service area, detailing how: a) 17 of the 34 indicators figures increased. b) 16 of the 34 indicators figures decreased. c) 1 of the 34 indicators remained the same. d) 1 indicator had no comparative information.

Members then posed questions to the Assistant Director for Highways and Capital Projects, specifically on the performance of Hopetown against the targeted figures prior to launch. Additionally, Members questioned the figures regarding road safety, notably the increasing numbers of serious incidents per week.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

CLS12 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director, Law and Governance, submitted a report (previously circulated) regarding the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the 2025/26 Municipal Year. The Democratic Officer spoke to this report and invited Members to consider the attached draft work programme (Appendix 1).

Members requested an update on the Councillor Case Monitoring System Task and Finish Group, to which the Democratic Officer responded stating that the relevant Officer will be in contact to arrange a meeting with those Members interested in this Task and Finish Group.

Members also requested that the Harm Reduction on Highways Approach be moved from the October meeting of this Committee to the January meeting, which was agreed.

RESOLVED – That the contents of this report be noted.