

COUNCIL
26 JULY 2019

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO

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 no change in the number of reported crimes in Darlington during the period 1 April to 31 May 2018 compared with the same period in 2019. This equates to a total of 2173 crimes. Crimes showing an increase include violence without injury (disorder) and sexual offences. Crimes showing a decrease include theft, burglary, vehicle crime and shoplifting.
3. During the same period there has been a four per cent reduction in the number of reported crimes in Darlington Town Centre. This equates to a total of 313 crimes. Crimes showing an increase include violence without injury (disorder), sexual offences and a slight increase in burglary (low numbers).
4. Darlington has also experienced a 14 per cent decrease in all reported incidents to the police during the same period and anti-social behaviour is currently 20 per cent lower than last year.
5. Exceptions relating to increases in anti-social behaviour include Faverdale, Haughton East, Whessoe and Lingfield.
6. 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.

Serious and Organised Crime Presentations

7. Fifty members of Community Safety, Youth Offending and Early Help recently attended a presentation in relation to serious and organised crime. Topics covered included local threat and risk, current developments and trends and future opportunities for working together.

Operation Helium

8. Operation Helium was a joint police and council operation focused on the unlawful supply of Class A drugs in Darlington. The operation was completed on 10 April 2019 and resulted in 16 arrests and the closure of premises used in connection with crime related activity. Due to the complexity of the case the investigation continues and a file will be submitted for consideration by the Crown Prosecution Service regarding future charges.

Public Protection Partnership

9. On 5 June 2019, members of Durham Constabulary, British Transport Police and Darlington Borough Council Community Safety met to develop a partnership designed to tackle the problems associated with safeguarding and vulnerability around the railway network. This work was initially commissioned by Darlington Children's Board and the meeting concluded with a series of actions including improved intelligence sharing, submission of referrals, provision of specialist training (for BTP) and membership of the Darlington Multi-Agency Problem-Solving Group.

Community Safety Team Launch

10. The official launch of the Community Safety team was held on 25 June 2019 in the Dolphin Centre. It was attended by over 60 guests, including DBC councillors and representatives from our partners in the emergency services, voluntary sector and other councils. During the event the Civic Enforcement Officers were bestowed powers normally reserved for the police by Chief Constable Jo Farrell. Speeches were given by Graham Hall, Jo Farrell, Councillor Jonathan Dulston and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Heather Scott.
11. The public launch event for the Community Safety team was held on 30 June 2019 in the Market Place and the Dolphin Centre. Billed as a 'Celebrate our Services Day' the public had the chance to see vehicles from fire and rescue, police, NEAS and the Blood Bikes as well as our own civic enforcement team. There were also 'stalls' where the public could view displays and talk to Trading Standards, Licensing and Private Sector Housing. A highlight for many of the attendees was the chance to 'tour' the CCTV control room and find out about the many things the CCTV team do, other than just monitor CCTV screens.
12. Both events gained good coverage in the local press and featured prominently in social media over the following days.

Trading Standards

Tenants Fees Act 2019

13. The main provisions of the Tenants Fees Act 2019 came into force on 1 June 2019. Landlords or agents cannot require tenants in the private rented sector in England, or any persons acting on behalf of a tenant or guaranteeing the rent, to make certain payments in connection with a tenancy. Trading Standards enforces this Act in respect to prohibitions applying to landlords and letting agents and the treatment of holding deposits.
14. Trading Standards issued a warning, via social media, to local residents to be aware of rogue traders offering gardening and tree cutting services, following a report made to a Civic Enforcement Officer by a local resident. The team will continue to make best use of social media to deliver early warnings to our community with the aim of preventing people from becoming victims of predatory rogue traders.

Private Sector Housing

EPC regulation for private landlords

15. The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property, England and Wales) Regulations 2015, establish a minimum level of energy efficiency for privately rented property in England and Wales of a Band E. The regulations are intended to ensure that tenants who most need more efficient homes, particularly vulnerable people, are able to enjoy a better living environment and lower energy bills. From 1 April 2020, all domestic private rental properties must be at a minimum of EPC band E, whether a new lease is being signed or not.

CONTEST

Counter Terrorism Local Profile

16. In response to Operation Dovetail (which is a government initiative designed to transfer some responsibilities of counter-terrorism from Police to local authorities) Durham Constabulary has recently produced a Counter Terrorism Local Profile, which can be cascaded to a wider audience than previously. The profile is currently in consultation and it is expected to be available to Members in the next reporting period.

Licensing

Management of Licensed Premises

17. Licensing have been working with Police and other responsible authorities to identify and address issues of poor management.
18. Two town centre night time venues have been identified as creating increased demand on Police resources and where serious assaults have occurred. This has resulted in formal agreements made at senior management level with each of the venues. Licensing are in the process of monitoring these agreements and if there are no improvements, applications will be made to review their licences at the Licensing Committee.

Licensing Responsible Authorities Forum

19. Bi-monthly Responsible Authorities meetings have been established to identify problem premises and those that are emerging as problems. A problem-solving approach is adopted to deal with the issues identified, with an escalation process to the Darlington Multi-Agency Problem-Solving Group for appropriate action if necessary.

Licensing Awareness Week

20. Council Licensing, Police and Security Industry Authority (SIA) will be launching a campaign to coincide with Licensing Awareness Week to raise awareness of safety issues with door staff. Five security companies have been identified to work with and information will be cascaded to teams around the town over the next twelve-months.

Purple Flag

21. Purple Flag aims to raise the standard and broaden the appeal of town and city centres at night. It is the benchmark for good night time destinations. Town and city centres that achieve a Purple Flag will be those that are safe, diverse, vibrant, appealing, well-managed and offer a positive experience to consumers. Darlington Borough Council Community Safety are currently working and actively engaged with a range of partners to secure accreditation, which will be considered in autumn 2019.

Community Engagement

Community Cohesion

22. The 'Celebrating Our Communities' event was held on 19 May 2019 at Central House Annexe, Darlington. A diverse audience attended the two-hour celebration and as well as networking, visitors had the opportunity to listen to talks delivered by the Police, Community Cohesion, Civic Enforcement and the Community Resilience Officer. The event which was attended by 50-60 guests helped to reinforce the positive links between Darlington Borough Council, Councillors, partners and communities.

**Councillor Jonathan Dulston
Community Safety Portfolio**