
Meeting	Housing and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	18 January 2022
Present	Councillors Fenton (Chair), Pavlovic (Vice-Chair), Heaton, Hollyer, Vassie and Wells
Apologies	Councillor Baker

33. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any prejudicial or discloseable pecuniary interest that they might have in respect of the business on the agenda. None were declared.

34. Minutes

A typographical error was highlighted in paragraph 4 of Minute 28, with 'rent arrays' being corrected to 'rent arrears'.

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting held 19 October 2021 be approved and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

35. Public Participation

It was reported that there were no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

36. Finance and Performance Quarter 2 Monitor 2021/22

This report provided details of the 2021/22 second quarter monitoring position for both finance and performance across Housing & Community Safety. The paper incorporated data to September 2021, which was reported to Executive on 18th November 2021. The Director of Housing, Economy and Regeneration, Head of Housing Delivery and Asset Management and Finance Manager, Corporate Finance Team were in attendance to present the report and respond to questions.

Officers presented the key points of the report to members, and concerns were raised about council house rent arrears which had worsened from pre-pandemic levels and stood at around £1.5 million, having remained at around that level since March 2021. Officers commented that the reduction in Universal Credit and the end of the furlough scheme had created a lasting impact, however the new Housing ICT system which was soon to be installed was to streamline and rent arrears recovery more efficient. Members requested more information and training on how the new system will work to enable them to advise constituents.

Officers stated that they were committed to broader customer engagement and detailed the processes in place, noting the new Strategy and Performance Team within Housing set up to learn more from customer feedback. Officers stated that remote working and disruptions to operations during the Covid-19 pandemic had made connections with customers much more difficult.

The number of general presentations of homelessness had increased during the Covid-19 pandemic due to its economic impacts as well as household dissolutions. Temporary accommodation was being used to house those who had become homeless before they can be resettled in council housing or the private sector, and officers agreed to provide statistics on this in future reports.

The committee discussed work to reduce the number of void properties in the city, which had included the use of external contractors. Members also raised concerns about disabled access in new developments and officers indicated they would provide members with more details around levels of broadband connectivity in the city.

Resolved:

- i. That the financial and performance management position across Housing and Community Safety be noted by the Committee.

Reason: To ensure expenditure is kept within the approved budget and performance is effectively scrutinised.

37. Safer York Partnership Priority: Tackling High Risk Antisocial Behaviour

This report provided an overview of how Antisocial behaviour (ASB) was being tackled in the city, and focused on the work of the joint North Yorkshire Police/City of York Council Community Safety Hub and the plans to develop that approach based on learning from delivery during the

challenges of COVID. The Head of Community Safety, Youth Justice Practice Manager and Superintendent Mark Khan of North Yorkshire Police were in attendance to present the report and respond to questions.

The committee discussed the work of the joint North Yorkshire Police and City of York Council Community Safety Hub and the plans to develop its work based on the learning gained from the challenges of delivery experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Officers outlined the current structure of the Community Safety Hub and its current approach to tackling anti-social behaviour, which aimed to prevent duplication of work and improve co-ordination by sharing information and intelligence between North Yorkshire Police and City of York on anti-social behaviour and environmental crime.

The Covid-19 had prompted several changes in the work of the Community Safety Hub which were being retained, for example virtual meetings, which allowed multi-agency meetings to be organised more easily and frequently and a stronger focus on early intervention and prevention of anti-social behaviour than enforcement due to the courts being closed during lockdowns which made prosecution impossible.

Policing UK and North Yorkshire Police (NYP) were moving to a public health approach to policing, which focused less on 'tertiary' or reactive action e.g. responding to calls/crisis management work which the police had traditionally undertaken and more on community level prevention of antisocial behaviour. A long term ambition for NYP was also to move to place-based working, with problem-solving training provided to staff and officers, with the Community Safety Hub being the driver of targeted activity in York.

Members discussed with officers the work of the Youth Justice Service and which type of interventions were usually most successful in helping with addressing anti-social behaviour and other issues around young people. Examples included working with the Victim Liaison Officer and communities, work with the NYP to help divert young people away from anti-social behaviour and towards other activities such as sporting. Empowering Youth was discussed, which gave young people the opportunity to discuss the issues facing their communities and contribute towards solutions. Referrals to the Youth Justice Service usually came directly from local police, schools or the courts.

The difficulties of using social media as a means of collecting information on social media were discussed, and NYP encouraged people to report any issues through official channels rather than via social media which cannot

be thoroughly monitored. Members raised concerns that trends towards virtual meetings would conflict with place-based working, however NYP believed that the two could work together, provided that there is always some level of physical presence.

The roles of PCSOs was discussed, and members requested that they remain posted to an area for as long as possible to enable the building of positive relations with the community – it was also requested that when police personnel are deployed to an area on a regular basis, they contact local councillors to increase co-operation.

It was suggested that future statistics presented to the committee show how many individuals are involved in anti-social behaviour, rather than solely the number of offences, as well as a comparison of current figures with pre-Covid levels of offences. Officers commented that an impact of Covid on anti-social behaviour had been significant increases in such activity as lockdowns ended as well as increased alcohol abuse.

Resolved:

- i. That the views of members on the delivery of work to tackle antisocial behaviour and how it is reflected in the refresh of this priority within the Community Safety Strategy be noted.

Reason: To involve members in the development of service delivery in tackling antisocial behaviour in York.

38. Work Plan

Members considered the Committee's work plan for 2021/22.

Resolved:

- i. That an item on the Decent Home Standard and the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit be brought to the April 2022 meeting of the Committee.
- ii. That an item on Q3 Finance Monitor be brought to the April 2022 meeting.
- iii. That an item on the Housing Delivery Programme update to Executive be brought to the March 2022 forum meeting.
- iv. That the work plan be noted.

Reason: To ensure the Committee has a plan of work for 2021/2022.

Cllr S Fenton, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 8.08 pm].