

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING ON TUESDAY, 19TH JANUARY, 2021 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: David Levett (Chair), Val Bryant, Terry Hone, Tony Hunter, Lisa Nash, Sue Ngwala, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Claire Strong, Tom Tyson and Claire Billing (substitute)*

In Attendance: *Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn (Leader of the Council), Nurainatta Katevu (Legal Regulatory Team Manager), Rachel Cooper (Controls, Risk and Performance Manager), Rebecca Coates (Community Protection Manager), Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Anna Gouveia (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present: *Councillor Ian Albert (Executive Member for Finance and IT) and at the commencement of the meeting approximately 3 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

67 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

Audio recording – 10 seconds

The Chair welcomed everyone to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting that was being conducted with Members and Officers at various locations, communicating via audio/video and online. There was also the opportunity for the public and press to listen to and view proceedings.

The Chair invited the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer to explain how proceedings would work and to confirm that Members and Officers were in attendance.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call to ensure that all Members, Officers and registered speakers could hear and be heard and gave advice regarding the following:

Extracts from the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol were included with the agenda and the full version was available on the Council's website which included information regarding:

- Live Streaming;
- Noise Interference;
- Rules of Debate;
- Voting; and
- Part 2 Items

Members were requested to ensure that they were familiar with the Protocol.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor David Levett started the meeting proper.

68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 3 minutes 15 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kate Aspinwall and Jim McNally.

Having given due notice, Councillor Clare Billing advised that she would be substituting for Councillor Kate Aspinwall.

69 MINUTES - 21 JANUARY 2020 TO 8 DECEMBER 2020

Audio Recording – 3 minutes 35 seconds

Councillor David Levett advised that since the beginning of March, when NHDC started to hold meetings remotely, it had not been possible to approve Minutes of meetings. Minutes could now be approved with the electronic signature of the Chair being applied following approval.

There were 5 sets of Minutes to agree:

- 21 January 2020;
- 16 June 2020;
- 14 July 2020;
- 8 September 2020;
- 8 December 2020.

Councillors Terry Hone and Tom Tyson advised that they had given their apologies for the meeting held on 8th December 2020 so could not vote on those minutes.

Councillor David Levett proposed and Councillor Lisa Nash seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 21 January 2020, 16 June 2020, 14 July 2020, 8 September 2020 and 8 December 2020 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair;
- (2) That, with the authorisation of the Chair, his electronic signature and initials be attached to the Minutes approved in (1) above.

70 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 6 minutes 27 seconds

There was no other business notified.

71 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 6 minutes 33 seconds

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recordings would be available to hear on Mod.gov and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel.

- (3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

72 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 7 minutes 1 second

The Chair welcomed the following participants to the meeting to present the annual Crime and Disorder Matters update:

- Former Chief Inspector Sally Phillips, Hertfordshire Constabulary;
- Chief Inspector Jon Roche, Hertfordshire Constabulary;
- Sarah Pateman, Chair of Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA), Community Safety Manager, Stevenage Borough Council.

73 URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS

Audio recording – 1 hour 2 minutes 37 seconds

No urgent or general exception items were received.

74 CALLED-IN ITEMS

Audio recording – 1 hour 2 minutes 42 seconds

Since the last meeting, no decisions had been called-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

75 CRIME AND DISORDER MATTERS

Audio recording 7 minutes 36 seconds

The Community Protection Manager introduced the former North Herts Chief Inspector Sally Phillips, Chief Inspector Jon Roche and Sarah Pateman, Chair of SADA, to present on the matters discussed at the previous Committee meeting.

Chief Inspector Sally Phillips, Hertfordshire Constabulary thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee and provided Members with a verbal presentation in respect of Crime and Disorder Matters within North Hertfordshire including:

Policing during the pandemic

- Policing during the pandemic had been exceptionally challenging with the ever-changing situation of different tiers and lockdowns to police;
- At the start of the pandemic a dedicated operational command was set up across the force to ensure service delivery remained safe for public and staff;
- Dedicated patrols were set up in November to capture all the engagement and enforcement around Covid across each district;
- Last week alone, 780 reports of Covid breaches were received;
- Covid-related anti-social behaviour was dealt with positively, using the 4 Es process (Engage, Explain, Encourage, Enforce);
- Reports of suspicious activity, e.g. drug dealing, had increased as people had the opportunity to see more as they were working from home.

Crime statistics for 2020

- Drug supply and related serious violent crime remained a threat;
- The end of 2020 saw a 4.1% decrease of all crime in North Herts which was one of the highest performing CSPs in the county;
- The impact of Covid could be seen in the decrease in all crime across North Herts which was currently 17.4%, equating to around 1000 less crimes;
- Demand in complex areas of vulnerability and mental health had increased;
- North Herts had continued to see an increase in positive outcomes. This stood at 3.8% for traditional crime which was significantly above the force average;
- The Scorpion Team and Local Crime Unit had focused on robust investigation of County Lines drug supply and related violence and weapons resulting in positive outcomes and criminal justice outcomes through the Courts;
- They had also been working with counterparts in the Serious and Organised Crime team identifying organised crime groups and disrupting their behaviour, and carrying out preventative and protection work with the community to make North Herts a hostile place for that type of criminal activity to occur;
- The pandemic had disrupted some youth-related anti-social behaviour in Letchworth and Royston but preventative work was ongoing to ensure these areas did not become hotspots again.

Domestic Abuse during the pandemic

- The national increase in domestic abuse during the pandemic had been reflected locally;
- Each month had seen a consistent increase in domestic abuse during the pandemic: September had seen the highest increase of 15.4%, December had an increase of 4.7%, and July had seen a slight decrease in comparison with the previous year;
- Although domestic abuse had increased during the pandemic it was encouraging that people felt confident to report it;
- North Herts had one of the highest outcome rates within the county for domestic abuse;
- Part of the Community Safety Action Plan was to deliver the best possible response when domestic abuse had been reported;
- The J9 initiative was being used working with community partners to support survivors of domestic abuse;
- Virtual training focusing on 'Voice of the Child' had been delivered remotely;
- A new instant victim referral app, We Protect, was being trialled in a number of CSPs in the south of the county and would be rolled out across the force to aid early intervention;
- A victim service scheme was being piloted which was focused around medium risk victims, engaging with them, providing better signposting, and putting safeguarding in place;
- Perpetrator programmes were also being developed as part of an holistic approach.

Chief Inspector Phillips advised that, after two years of working at North Herts, she would be handing over to Chief Inspector Jon Roche as her successor.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Terry Hone.

Chief Inspector Phillips and Chief Inspector Roche responded to Members' questions as follows:

- The Police were actively managing car and motorcycle meets and vehicle anti-social behaviour in liaison with roads policing colleagues;

- Members of the community were encouraged to report any instances of car/motorcycle meets and anti-social driving so that the Police could assess these for Covid breaches and other offences;
- The majority of vehicle crime reported was unfortunately due to cars being left unlocked, this was especially common in rural areas. This was being addressed by messaging going out to remind people to lock their cars;
- The Police were aware of professional motor vehicle thieves who occasionally came to North Herts to do a spate of opportunistic crimes, but then not return for a couple of months;
- The recent spate of vehicle crime in Whitwell was under investigation and there was good intelligence on the potential perpetrator;
- Regarding the loss of police records reported in the media, the force was awaiting notification of the precise nature of the loss from the Home Office and data would be fed back into the system where possible to rectify the issue.

The Chair thanked Chief Inspectors Phillips and Roche for their presentation.

Sarah Pateman, Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA), thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Committee and provided Members with a PowerPoint presentation in respect of the work carried out by SADA and the support provided to survivors of domestic abuse during the pandemic.

Ms Pateman included the following information in her presentation:

- Tania Stokes, Domestic Abuse Liaison Officer was not present but thanks were conveyed to her for the important work she did to support the service;
- SADA was now launched in five areas across Hertfordshire;
- North Hertfordshire was thanked for its support which had enabled the service to expand within the county;
- The service had been publicised in the media and on social media;
- White Ribbon accreditation had been obtained for the second year running;
- Christmas gifts, trees, decorations and food parcels had been given out and a Virtual Christmas Grotto set up to enable the children to meet Father Christmas;
- The Modern Slavery Service had been enhanced;
- Safe space provision had been expanded from 2 to 20 properties;
- SADA's book Survivor Stories had been published on Amazon;
- SADA had been working closely with partners such as Letchworth Foodbank;
- Funding had been received from North Herts District Council (£20,000), Ministry of Housing (£82,000), and Letchworth Heritage Fund (£5,600);
- Types of support during the first lockdown period included: security provided to help people remain in their homes, video doorbells, legal advice; refuge; move-on accommodation; local authority property applications; drop-ins; You, Me and Mum virtual course; referrals to Children's Services; return home after refuge; other partner referrals; work with Housing Associations to manage moves rather than give up homes and help into private rental accommodation;
- Training had been carried out with the Housing Association and frontline local authority staff;
- In September 2018 government funding of £165,000 had been received for a second safe space in North Herts. This was used to secure a three-bedroomed house in Letchworth with a private landlord;
- Free champion training was offered to all internal and external partners and agencies;
- Domestic abuse awareness and safety planning training was also offered to all.

The following Member asked questions:

- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Clare Billing.

In response to the questions, Ms Pateman advised:

- the funding from the Ministry of Housing had been used to fund the Safe Spaces rented accommodation and other funding was urgently being sought for the future;
- the average length of occupancy of the Safe Spaces was 6 months to one year and had increased due to delays caused by the pandemic;
- all SADA clients were given a mobile number they can use to text or call their support worker;
- various apps and code words were used and the service was always tailored to the individual.

Councillor Clare Billing thanked SADA for their valuable work in the community.

The Chair thanked Ms Pateman for her presentation.

76 RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Audio recording 1 hour 2 minutes 47 seconds

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager presented the report entitled Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report entitled Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and comment on actions and feedback received regarding resolutions previously made.

77 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

Audio recording 1 hour 3 minutes 33 seconds

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager presented the report entitled Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Work Programme for Future Committee Meetings;
- Appendix B – Forward Plan for 7 December 2020;
- Appendix C – Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan in regard to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The following Members asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Terry Hone;
- Councillor Tony Hunter;
- Councillor David Levett.

Members comments included:

- It would be beneficial for the Committee to review the whole Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan to see how actions were progressing and provide any help or support;

- It would be useful for the Committee to review the draft Design SPD again before it went to Cabinet, particularly as amendments had been made since the Committee last considered it in September 2020;
- An agenda should be considered for the meeting to which settle and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) had been invited.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report entitled Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted;
- (2) That Members be requested to inform the Chair and the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager of any items to be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 9 March 2021 and beyond;
- (3) That the following items be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 9 March 2021:
 - Progress made regarding the recommendations of the Peer Review Challenge;
 - The Draft Design SPD.
- (4) That Members be requested to inform the Chair and the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager of the items that settle and LEP should concentrate on when attending the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting;
- (5) That an invitation to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be sent to settle and LEP with an agenda of items for consideration.

REASON FOR DECISION: To allow the Committee to set a work programme which provides focussed Member oversight, encourages open debate and seeks to achieve service improvement through effective policy development and meaningful policy and service change.

78 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT ('RIPA') ANNUAL REVIEW

Audio recording 1 hour 13 minutes 57 seconds

The Leader of the Council presented the report entitled Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act ('RIPA') Annual Review.

The following Members commented on the report:

- Councillor Terry Hone;
- Councillor David Levett.

Members noted that the powers were very seldom used.

RESOLVED: That the report entitled Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act ('RIPA') Annual Review be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with best practice guidance and the Committee's Terms of Reference.

79 MID YEAR AMENDMENTS TO PERFORMANCE MONITORING TARGETS FOR 20/21

Audio Recording – 1 hour 16 minutes 5 seconds

The Leader of the Council presented the report entitled Mid-Year Amendments to Performance Monitoring Targets for 2020/21.

He advised that two amendments to targets were proposed being:

MI LI015 - Number of Visits to Leisure Facilities

- It was proposed to reduce the target from 1,530,000 to 205,440.
- This target was set with the assumption that the centres will reopen in March 2021.
- If the facilities did not reopen in March the target would be reduced to 162,950.

REG3 - Percentage of Environmental Health Programmed Inspections Completed

- It was proposed that the current target of 95.0% be deleted
- Given the current resource commitment to the pandemic and future commitments to the EU transition this PI would be for reporting purposes only.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Claire Strong.

Members commented that consideration should be given to opening the outdoor pools earlier in the season and that there would be value in considering the number of views on YouTube compared with public attendance at meetings in order to gauge public engagement with virtual meetings.

Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance and IT advised that, from a financial point of view, opening of the outdoor pools was under consideration.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager advised that her team was undertaking some research regarding the comparison of public attendance at physical meetings against views of YouTube recordings of meetings.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Controls, Risk and Performance Manager be requested to liaise with the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager in order to include the number of views of Council meetings on YouTube in the next performance target report.
- (2) That the Leader of the Council be requested to refer the possibility of re-opening the outdoor pools earlier in 2021 to Leisure Services, in order to maximise the potential number of visitors to leisure facilities and provide this service to the community which had been unavailable in 2020.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That Cabinet considers and formally approves the proposed amendments to the PIs and any associated targets that will continue to be monitored throughout 2020/2021 by Overview & Scrutiny;
- (2) That Cabinet considers instigating a "reporting only" figure of those viewing Council meetings on YouTube in order to gauge public engagement with virtual meetings.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that Performance Monitoring is effective and reflects the current national situation.

80 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Audio recording – 1 hour 23 minutes 53 seconds

No questions had been submitted.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm

Chair