

# OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 17 JULY 2013

Report Title	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – SERIOUS ACQUISITIVE CRIME, VIOLENT CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
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**Agenda Status: PUBLIC**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the comments and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Review – Serious Acquisitive Crime (SAC), violent crime and community safety.
- 1.2 The Executive Summary to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s report is attached at Appendix A. Members of Cabinet have been issued with a copy of the full report. All Overview and Scrutiny Review reports are published on the Overview and Scrutiny page on the Council’s Webpage and a copy of the this report can be located: [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny) - Previous Scrutiny Reviews.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that:

**Northampton Borough Council (NBC)**

- 2.1.1 A funding pot is identified to provide target hardening for properties that are located within hot spot areas.
- 2.1.2 Northampton Borough Council ensures active engagement with the Troubled Families Agenda.
- 2.1.3 Prior to any physical works being undertaken, consideration to long-term maintenance is given and resources identified.
- 2.1.4 Councillors are issued with regular updated information on the demographics of their wards.

## **Housing**

- 2.1.5 Obsolete signs in place around the Council's housing stock are removed and all relevant signage is in situ and is clearly visible.
- 2.1.6 An enhanced and responsive maintenance service is implemented in "hotspot" areas.
- 2.1.7 A funding pot is identified to provide target hardening on Council properties that are located within hot spot areas.

## **Planning/Regeneration**

- 2.1.8 It is ensured that when land or buildings is transferred, it is stipulated that the land must be cleared and properly secured.
- 2.1.9 Consideration is given to utilising unused open spaces in residential areas across the town for public use.
- 2.1.10 Planning continues to work with and seek advice and guidance from the Police Architectural Liaison Officer to ensure new developments meet 'Design out Crime' standards.

## **Neighbourhood Wardens**

- 2.1.11 Clarification is given on the role of the Neighbourhood Wardens. This information is disseminated to ward Councillors.
- 2.1.12 Neighbourhood Wardens undertake annual refresher training on crime prevention matters.
- 2.1.13 An on-going professional training and development plan, with specific focus on crime prevention and community safety, for Neighbourhood Wardens is produced and implemented.

## **Partners and Agencies**

- 2.1.14 Following completion of projects in hotspot locations, an exit plan is developed outlining support and maintenance post project, in order that the positive results are maintained.
- 2.1.15 On-going maintenance budgets are included with any environmental improvements such as fencing.
- 2.1.16 A directory for young people is developed that provides information on services and facilities available to young people.
- 2.1.17 There is timelier sharing of data from Accident and Emergency with the Community Safety Partnership. This means weekly highlight reports and full details on a monthly basis.

- 2.1.18 A mechanism is introduced to ensure that the Health and Wellbeing Board can provide information and feedback to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).
- 2.1.19 Membership of the CSP be revisited to ensure that it includes all relevant Agencies and service areas, including the Voluntary Sector.
- 2.1.20 When training/education around crime prevention issues is undertaken, consideration is always be given to the audience and the trainer is mindful to use appropriate language that is universally understood.
- 2.1.21 Information systems between the Police and local Councillors are reviewed and further developed.
- 2.1.22 Support is given to the Intensive Community Engagement programme hosted by Northamptonshire Police.
- 2.1.23 Formal links between Enterprise Management Services (EMS) and Northampton Borough Council are developed around situational crime to ensure faster information sharing and faster responses to dealing with service issues, therefore resulting in a positive outcome for the community.

### **Community Forums**

- 2.1.24 Residents Associations, Community Groups and Forums are encouraged to use open spaces which in turn will assist in community development and ownership of their local areas.

### **Northants Probation Service**

- 2.1.25 A programme of works on the priority locations identified by Northampton Borough Council is built into the Community Pay Back Initiative.

### **Police and Crime Commissioner, Northamptonshire**

- 2.1.26 A copy of this report is provided to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Northamptonshire.

## **3. Background and Issues**

3.1 The purpose of the Review was:

- To investigate, as a benchmark, Northampton's crime statistics in relation to serious acquisitive and violent crime
- To identify 'hotspots' in relation to serious acquisitive and violent crime
- To identify the impact that serious acquisitive crime and violent crime has on the residents of Northampton
- To identify the serious acquisitive crime and violent crime issues that Northampton Borough Council, in partnership with other Agencies, can have an impact upon

- 3.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed at its work programming event in March 2012 agreed to include a review of serious acquisitive crime, violent crime and community safety. These were issues that had been identified by a number of members of the public as key concerns. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 1 to undertake the review. An in-depth review commenced in May 2012 and concluded in April 2013.
- 3.3 A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Danielle Stone (Chair); Councillor David Palethorpe (Vice Chair); Councillors Mick Ford, Brendan Glynane, Christopher Malpas, Dennis Meredith, Brian Sargeant and Chief Inspector Max Williams, Northants Police, Sharon Henley, Northants Police, and Neil Bartholomey, Chair, Northampton PubWatch, (Co-Optees).
- 3.4 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities - Corporate Priority 2 - Invest in safer, cleaner neighbourhoods, creating an attractive, clean and safe environment.
- 3.5 The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:
- Context:
    - Local statistics
    - Demographics – local and national
  - Baseline data:
    - National crime statistics
    - Local crime statistics
  - Synopsis of various research documents and other published documents
  - Evidence from expert internal witnesses
  - Evidence from expert external witnesses
  - Evidence from ward Councillors
  - Site visits
- 3.6 Evidence was collated from a variety of key advisors, including:
- Leader of the Council, NBC
  - Chair of Community Safety Partnership
  - Key Officers, Northants Police
  - IOM Team, Northants Probation
  - Neighbourhood Wardens
  - Head of Offender Management Services, Northampton Prisons
  - Accident and Emergency, Northampton General Hospital
  - Victim Support
  - Northampton Youth Forum
  - The Police and Crime Commissioner
  - Housing Services, Northampton Borough Council
  - Sunflower Centre
  - Ward Councillors

- 3.7 In considering the evidence the following conclusions were made: -
- 3.7.1 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that this Review should concentrate on wider issues and that if initial figures indicated that the domestic abuse was disproportionately high it would be relevant for a future Scrutiny Review to be undertaken on interpersonal violence. The Scrutiny Panel felt that the remit of this Review could include how improved education on domestic violence issues could be provided for the non-British White population.
- 3.7.2 The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be useful for ward Councillors to have regularly updated information on the demographics of their areas. It was however noted that this information is available on the Northamptonshire Observatory and that a permanent link is detailed within each edition of the monthly Councillor E-Newsletter, (Councillor Connect).
- 3.7.3 From the evidence provided in the statistical data there is evidence that there has been an increase in Serious Acquisitive Crime (SAC), especially vehicle crime which impacts negatively upon the residents of the town.
- 3.7.4 It was concluded that it would be useful for all Councillors to be informed of when initiatives are being undertaken in their wards by the Community Safety Partnership.
- 3.7.5 It was concluded that target hardening of properties in hotspot locations was effective in reducing burglary.
- 3.7.6 The need for a representative from Housing Services, Northampton Borough Council, to be a member of the Community Safety Partnership was emphasised. It was highlighted that access to safe and adequate housing is an essential element in building positive community cohesion and discouraging crime. The Scrutiny Panel further agreed that there is a need for all service areas involved in community safety activity to attend meetings of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).
- 3.7.7 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed that training will be provided to all Community Safety Partnership members who work on the frontline. It felt, however, that awareness training on domestic abuse should be made available for Councillors.
- 3.7.8 It was recognised that when training correct use of terminology should be emphasised.
- 3.7.9 The value of whole family interventions be emphasised and that such cases require multi-Agency intervention, including Policing, education, profiling, training and support.
- 3.7.10 It was welcomed that the CSP is currently undertaking work endeavouring to engage with Eastern/Central Europeans. Those who are economic migrants do not appear to be engaged with any community, simply being here to work. Data is showing this ethnic group as being of being vulnerable to crime either as a perpetrator or a victim. The numbers involved/affected are disproportionately higher than the population figures.
- 3.7.11 It is a statutory requirement that Accident and Emergency data is provided to the Community Safety Partnership and it was felt that data should be provided on a more regular basis.

- 3.7.12 The Scrutiny Panel noted that there appears to be a gap between Public Health and Housing Services but realised that steps were in place to address this.
- 3.7.13 The Scrutiny Panel conveyed concerns that it appeared that Neighbourhood Wardens are being expected to take on a much wider role. Whilst they have received some training the Scrutiny Panel felt that they are not crime prevention professionals and should not be giving advice on that basis. The role of the Wardens should be about working with partner Agencies and signposting the public to the correct service and not actually solving crime issues directly.
- 3.7.14 It was acknowledged that Neighbourhood Wardens sit on a number of Partnership sub groups and feed into action plans and the overarching process.
- 3.7.15 It was generally felt that members of the public will often speak to Neighbourhood Wardens when they would otherwise be reluctant to engage with the Police. Neighbourhood Wardens are in regular contact with an area and are generally trusted.
- 3.7.16 Further to the site visits undertaken by the Panel it was felt that disused property needs to be secured so that it does not become a target for vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Such sites should be protected or screened. It would be beneficial for best practice advice to be sought from the relevant department within Northampton Borough Council.
- 3.7.17 The evidence gathered from the site visits concluded that there are issues in areas where fencing has been erected in order to try and solve problems. These had not been maintained or panels had been removed to allow easier routes through. This highlighted the need for ensuring that on-going maintenance is identified prior to any schemes being undertaken.
- 3.7.18 The evidence gathered highlighted that there is a need to reduce the impact of the “broken window syndrome” on members of the community; such issues are identified through Environmental Audits produced by Crime Prevention Officers for the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). It was felt that a possible improvement is an enhanced, responsive maintenance service in “hotspot” areas.
- 3.7.19 Vice and drug issues appear to be prominent in some areas of the town and the ‘broken window syndrome’ appears to be the forerunner to crime.
- 3.7.20 The Scrutiny Panel felt that the unused open spaces should be utilised to create public use with a view to reducing the “broken window syndrome.”
- 3.7.21 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted the importance of educating residents in security so the purpose of security measures are understood and used. Examples such as locking doors, windows and gates, securing vehicles and the removal of visible property.
- 3.7.22 Lack of maintenance management in areas is an issue, for example:
- Access controlled car park not working
  - Lack of maintenance to fencing
  - Littering
  - Landscaping maintenance issues

- 3.7.23 The development of a Neighbourhood Forum for the Spring Boroughs area is currently taking place. There is a need for it to comprise at least 21 individuals who either work or reside in the area. The Scrutiny Panel felt it would be useful for at least one individual from each of the houses (block of flats) to be elected to the Forum.
- 3.7.24 The Scrutiny Panel agreed that there is a need to understand NBC's maintenance programme for housing stock and estates, including communal doors, garage blocks, street cleansing, and grounds maintenance. For example - when repairs are undertaken there is a need for them to be made, not only to the front access communal doors but also to the rear.
- 3.7.25 The Panel welcomed the trial of the Intensive Community Engagement programme that is currently taking place in the South West Sector of the Northampton. Part of the programme includes 'Rich Picturing', where the community is asked to draw pictures of their neighbourhood currently, and also what they would like it to look like. These pictures can reveal issues that the Police are unaware of. Matters that are not considered to be within the Police's remit will be passed to the relevant Agency. The Panel considered this initiative would help to engage with the community and identify problems and the ward Councillors could be a long term strategic link.
- 3.7.26 It was emphasised that in certain areas, the completion of a CASPAR project had been very positive but no further support was provided to the community following completion of the project. The Scrutiny Panel felt that an exit strategy should always be put in place, ensuring a level of support and on-going maintenance if required.
- 3.7.27 The Scrutiny Panel was disappointed that, due to the lack of current projects such as CASPAR in Spring Boroughs, coupled with the current economic climate and lack of officer presence that the area had begun to deteriorate.
- 3.7.28 The previous benefits of a Community Group undertaking gardening activities in the Pocket Park on Spring Boroughs were realised.
- 3.7.29 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that it would be beneficial to encourage Residents Associations and Community Forums to use open space facilities which in turn would assist in developing community spirit.
- 3.7.30 Collection of alcohol related incidents data is carried out in Accident and Emergency (A&E). The value of this is limited because the data is not shared in a timely manner.
- 3.7.31 The Panel recognised that, on occasions, victims of domestic abuse presenting at A&E are not referred to supporting Agencies.
- 3.7.32 The Scrutiny Panel realised that a lot of anti-social behaviour is connected to litter and environmental problems. There needs to be a process for the information flow to Enterprise Management Services (EMS) be stronger and with faster responses.
- 3.7.33 The Scrutiny Panel noted that work is underway to ascertain whether the large number of fly tipping incidents relate to problems which people have with access to home waste and recycling centres. There are problems with shared areas at housing complexes and in private alleyways. These areas can cause a series of problems and a solution needs to be implemented to ensure that issues are dealt with quickly when reported.

- 3.7.34 EMS provides schedules to the Council detailing work that is being undertaken in each area. The Scrutiny Panel felt it would be useful for this information to be disseminated to all Council departments.
- 3.7.35 The Scrutiny Panel concluded that working with partners and other Agencies is vital in providing a holistic approach to making improvements.
- 3.7.36 Significant progress has been made regarding the issues surrounding people attending pubs and clubs in the town centre area. The introduction of Night Watch, which includes the traffic light system and the banning of some key violent offenders from the town centre, has created a positive effect, was welcomed.
- 3.7.37 Good communication between door staff and the Police was recognised.

## **4. Options**

- 4.1 Cabinet will need to consider the possible options as part of its response to the recommendations.

## **5. Implications (including financial implications)**

### **5.1 Policy**

- 5.1.1 The work of Overview and Scrutiny plays a major part in the development of the Council's policy framework through its work programme.
- 5.1.2 The report and its recommendations have policy implications in relation serious acquisitive crime, violent crime and community safety. Cabinet's response will need to consider these issues in detail.

### **5.2 Resources and Risk**

- 5.2.1 Cabinet will need to consider the resourcing issues for the recommendations made.

### **5.3 Legal**

- 5.3.1 Legal issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

### **5.4 Equality**

- 5.4.1 Equality issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

### **5.5 Consultees (Internal and External)**

- 5.5.1 The Committee consulted and took evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in paragraph 3.6 of this report.

## 6. Background Papers

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report – Serious Acquisitive Crime, violent crime and community safety (April 2013 )
- Minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 25 April 2013

**Report Author and Title:** Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Jamie Lane, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee