NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 2 - THE IMPACT OF ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ON THE TOWN

Thursday, 28 January 2016

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:	Councillor Dennis Meredith (Chair), Councillors Tony Ansell, Jamie Lane, Brian Oldham, Zoe Smith and Graham Walker
WITNESSES	Chief Inspector Kevin Byrne, Northants Police Julie Parsons, Anti-social Behaviour Unit & Rural Crime Team Sophie Heasman and Phil Conaty, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Niall Spencer, CAN Craig McGuire and Robert McGregor, S2S Raymond Everall, Chair, MAG Councillor Jonathan Nunn David Hedger, Trading Standards
	Councillor Arthur McCutcheon - Observing
OFFICERS	Debbie Ferguson, Community Safety Manager Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer
Members of the Public	Ida Herman Lisa Kotoka

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. DEPUTATION/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2015 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) NORTHANTS POLICE

Kevin Byrne, Operations Chief Inspector, Northants Police, and Sergeant Julie Parsons**,** Anti-social Behaviour Unit & Rural Crime Team, presented their comprehensive response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel, highlighting the salient points. They also advised briefly of what their roles consisted of.

Police resources were identified:

- There are three Police sectors – Central (town centre and mile square), North East and South West
- Staffing comprises – 30.5 Sergeants, 111 Police Constables and 105 PCSOs
- The South West Sector comprise 40 Response Team Officers, 10 Neighbourhood Officers and 10 PCSOs

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- In response to a query about anti-social behaviour spots, it was confirmed that these are Blackthorn, St David's and the town centre
- The Scrutiny Panel commented on the need for zero tolerance for street drinking. CI Byrne commented that he was in favour of not having Street Drinkers in the town centre, there was a need for correct partnership working to deal with the problem
- CI Byrne advised that there were 35 cases of anti-social behaviour on the Central Sector, 24 cases in relation to Street drinking. Street drinking is a social problem and it can be difficult to enforce when it is a medical problem. There is a need for sustained partnership working.
- The Scrutiny Panel referred to its attendance at a recent Night Safe event acknowledging the Police Officer resources on suicide watch in the detention area. CI Byrne advised that Police priorities are to protect vulnerable people and reduce violent crime. A number of detainees have mental health problems that are often drug and/or alcohol related. There is a need guard vulnerable detainees.
- Anti-social behaviour issues are different in Blackthorn and St David's to that of the town centre. In Blackthorn and St David's it is youth related.
- In answer to a question about a wet area in the town for Street Drinkers, CI Byrne advised that this is subject to discussion. Other areas in the county have such an area, for example Corby. It was acknowledged that previously the town did have a wet area located near to the old Fish Market and it had been entitled "Tolerance area". Drinkers became badly behaved and it impacted upon nearby businesses and it was removed.
- A wet area has to be supervised and can be resource intensive.

CI Byrne and Sergeant Parsons were thanked for providing a comprehensive response to the Panel's core questions.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(B) CASE MANAGER, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UNIT

Sophie Heasman and Phil Conaty, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, presented their comprehensive response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel, highlighting the salient points:

- Following a referral and acceptance of a case an action plan is produced and discussed at monthly meetings. Working Groups are also set up to look at specific issues.
- Phil Conaty advised that he is the responsible Case Manager for street drinking and begging within the town centre. He highlighted that if Street Drinkers do not want to engage then other tools can be looked at to address the issues. He referred to beggars within the town and the process that has been adopted between the ASBU and Police which revolves around the use of yellow (first warning) and red card (conditional caution) warning system. When a red card is given to an individual for begging related issues they are given a conditional caution, lasting for three months, which requires them to engage with drug and alcohol support agencies. If this process isn't adhered to by the individual then they are summonsed to court for the offence.
- Should the above measures be unsuccessful for any type of referral then the following enforcement tools are available to the unit:

    - Community Protection Notice warning letter
    - Community Protection Notice
    - Injunctions to Prevent Nuisance and Annoyance (IPNAs)
    - Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO)
    - Closure Powers

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- Street drinking monitoring takes place. The ASB Unit is aware of 47 Street Drinkers, 5 of which have received ASB Orders and 1 a Community Protection Notice. The Police have allocated an Officer to tackle begging. 2 Beggars have ASB Orders, 2 have Community Protection Orders and 1 Beggar has been reported for summons.
- 25 Rough Sleepers are known but it is acknowledged that there are more than this.
- There will be a rough sleepers count over the whole of the town in February between the hours of 11pm and 3am, the objective will be to engage with the Rough Sleepers.
- In answer to a query regarding zero tolerance for street drinking, Phil Conaty confirmed this would be useful.

- In answer to a query regarding signposting Rough Sleepers to the support Agencies, it was confirmed that Officers would aim to engage with the Rough Sleepers on the count.
- The Scrutiny Panel referred to anti-social behaviour that takes place near to All Saints church.
- In answer to a question how correspondence is delivered to Rough Sleepers it was confirmed that Police officers or PCSOs do a hand delivery.
- The proposed new Rough Sleeper Strategy will aim to try and prevent individuals sleeping rough in the future, by providing accommodation and support to those individuals at an early stage.
- The Scrutiny Panel referred to the "Green Book" that was issued to all Councillors back in 2003. This was a useful document that contained details of Agencies and contacts. It was suggested that such a document should be re-visited.
- Sophie Heasman confirmed that the ASB Unit has a similar document and a copy would be forwarded to the Scrutiny Officer.
- In response to a query, it was confirmed that some Street Drinkers are also Rough Sleepers.
- Officers from Oasis House seek out and engage with Rough Sleepers and direct them to Agencies such as Oasis House and other support agencies
- The Scrutiny Panel conveyed its concerns regarding some licensed establishments serving small quantities of alcohol to Street Drinkers early in the morning. It was noted that 2 Licensed Off Licences in the town centre are not now permitted to serve alcohol before 10am and cannot sell less than four cans at a time.
- Anti-social behaviour near to the train station was referred to.

Sophie Heasman and Phil Conaty were thanked for attending the meeting and providing a response to the core questions of the Panel.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(C) DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

A written response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel was received from the Director of Public Health, Northamptonshire County Council.

The Scrutiny Panel noted the content of the written document.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(D) DIRECTOR, A&E, NORTHAMPTON GENERAL HOSPITAL

Consideration of this item was deferred. The Chair confirmed that it was expected that the Director, A&E, Northampton General Hospital, would be able to provide a written response to the final meeting of the Scrutiny Panel in March.

(E) DIRECTOR, EAST MIDLANDS AMBULANCE SERVICE (EMAS)

The Scrutiny Panel noted a written response to its core questions from East Midlands Ambulance Service.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(F) DIRECTOR, CAN

Niall Spencer CAN, presented the comprehensive response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel, highlighting the salient points:

- Work in relation to anti-social behaviour (ASB) on the racecourse is funded by the PCC. CAN works with the Community Café to tackle ASB in the area, for example a group of young people hanging around, using drugs etc.
- Street based work takes place. CAN aims to engage with you people, work with them and turn them around.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- A number of young people contact CAN direct but it was acknowledged that some may never engage with CAN.
- CAN goes into schools regarding early intervention.
- CAN works with accident and emergency.
- The Scrutiny Panel discussed the sale of psychoactive substances.
- In response to a query about training offered by CAN, it was confirmed that training is offered and this includes psychoactive substances.
- The Scrutiny Panel felt it would be very useful to get information to the Federation of Residents' Association regarding illegal drugs and psychoactive substances and the health implications etc.
- Niall Spencer confirmed that there is a need to find out the root cause for ASB and how offenders can be engaged and signposted to the appropriate Agencies.
- Sergeant Parsons advised that she would become involved when ASB takes place. Offenders would be signposted for the relevant support. Through Public Protection Orders the Police has powers, allowing the designated person to confiscate alcohol and substances where it is felt it could lead to ASB and the banning of alcohol consumption in areas such as the foundation area and the Market Square. The Scrutiny Panel supported this and advised that it would include its support in its final report.

- A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested “Support through Partnership Grants for street based service to support substance misuse.”

Niall Spencer was thanked for attending the meeting and providing a response to the core questions of the Panel.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(G) TEAM LEADER, S2S

Craig McGuire and Robert McGregor presented their response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel:

- S2S sees and treats around 2,500 people a year. 700-800 from Northampton. There are around 80 new clients each month.
- S2S sees clients aged 18 and over.
- Psychoactive substances are perceived a young person’s substance but S2S has 25 clients that report using these.
- Three weeks ago S2S had to call an ambulance due to a client using psychoactive substances.
- 80% of clients are male and in the 40-50 age bracket using psychoactive substances. Young people are more visible in their usage as it tends to be on the streets where as older people use it more privately.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- It was confirmed that personal cannabis usage is illegal
- In response to a query about Street Drinkers, Craig advised that a large percentage of S2S’ clients are Street Drinkers and homeless. Some are Beggars too. A number have complex problems and mental health issues.
- The vast majority of clients are self-referrals.
- CAN is open, Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm.
- Craig McGuire acknowledge the reason for banning the early sale of alcohol but advised if dependent people cannot get alcohol early in the morning the can go into “dependency mode.”
- S2S also has a Service Directory and would forward a copy to the Scrutiny Officer.
- Aquarius offers alcohol awareness training free of charge. Details of the training offered would be forwarded to the Scrutiny Officer.
- In response to a query regarding S2S’ views on zero tolerance on street drinking in the town centre, Craig McGuire reiterated that if it is made difficult for people to obtain small amounts of alcohol, there could be more presents at A&E.

Craig McGuire and Robert McGregor were thanked for attending the meeting and providing a response to the core questions of the Panel.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(H) DIRECTOR, TRADING STANDARDS, NCC

David Hedger presented Trading Standards' comprehensive response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel, highlighting the salient points.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- In response to a query about psychoactive substances and the effect on young people and the town, David Hedger referred to a closure of a shop following a prosecution for selling intoxicating substances to under 18's. The operation had been led by the Police and Trading Standards assisted.
- David Hedger advised that it is normally difficult to bring about action regarding psychoactive substances as the way they are developed/produced keeps changing. In the absence of evidence of sales to minors, there would be a need to pay for an expert to analyse the substance, and provide evidence that the content of the packet is definitely unsafe and causes harm beyond reasonable doubt to be successful using product safety legislation. Investigations have had to be discontinued due to the difficulty in showing this to the criminal burden of proof.
- The Government Bill in relation to psychoactive substances was supported by the Scrutiny Panel. It was realised that such an Act would stop retailing and wholesaling of psychoactive substances in the UK. (The Act was published on 29 January 2016 but requires commencement orders to give it effect).
- The Scrutiny Panel agreed that a potential recommendation of its final report would be to write to the local MPs supporting the introduction of the Government's Bill.
- Further potential recommendations were suggested – awareness raising around psychoactive substances.
- It was acknowledged that when Ireland passed legislation in relation to psychoactive substances shops selling this closed.
- In response to a query regarding counterfeit alcohol, David Hedger advised the problem is more prominent with counterfeit tobacco although they had successfully prosecuted (in November 2015) a Northampton retailer for selling counterfeit vodka in September 2014.
- Trading Standards does not have the powers to close businesses down.

David Hedger was thanked for attending the meeting and providing a response to the core questions of the Panel.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(I) CHAIR, MARKETS ACTION GROUP (MAG)

Raymond Everall, Chair, Markets Action Group (MAG), and Councillor Jonathan Nunn, presented the comprehensive response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel, highlighting the salient points:

- Two Police Officers and two PCSOs are involved in retail crime and are on duty in the town centre at any one time.
- The excellent work of the Town Centre Sergeant regarding problems with psychoactive substances was highlighted.
- Anti-social behaviour in the town such as urinating in public, spitting and dog faeces was referred to.
- Raymond Everall supported the good Agency working.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- The Scrutiny Panel was referred to groups of youths that go around the town on bicycles and acts of anti-social behaviour.
- The night-time economy often "spills over" to the Market Square.
- Raymond Everall suggested that it would be useful for there to be a Task Force for the town centre to assist with anti-social behaviour.
- Councillor Nunn advised that the MAG has good dialogue with the PCC.
- Finding sustained answers to alleviating ASB is key.
- Businesses want a safe, clean environment.
- It was acknowledged that there are different requirements for the town centre and the town as a whole.
- The Scrutiny Panel heard that when ASB is dealt with, the environment it is being committed is also looked at. one size does not fit all.
- It was noted that support is provided through Partnership Grants for street based service to support substance abuse. A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested "To review existing resources to ascertain whether a Multi-Agency "Task Force" approach could be adopted in addressing anti-social behaviours for the town."

Raymond Everall and Councillor Jonathan Nunn were thanked for attending the meeting and providing a response to the core questions of the Panel.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

(J) CONSERVATION COMMITTEES

A written response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel was received from Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust.

The Scrutiny Panel noted the content of the written document.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

6. BEST PRACTICE

The Scrutiny Panel received a briefing note detailing best practice elsewhere.

The information would inform the evidence base of this Scrutiny Panel.

7. BACKGROUND DATA

The Scrutiny Panel received background data:

A comprehensive briefing note regarding Late Night Levy
The Cleaning Schedule for the Town Centre
Data in relation to homelessness and rough sleepers

The information provided would inform the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

The Scrutiny Panel requested information regarding the chewing gum removal machine to be forwarded to the Panel.

The meeting concluded at 8:40 pm