



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16:35 to 18:15

20 September 2018

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Fullman (vice chair) Carlo, Fulton-McAlister (M), Hampton, Manning, Raby, Sands (S), Smith, Stewart, Thomas (Va) and Thomas (Vi)

Also present: Paul Sanford, assistant chief constable, Norfolk Constabulary
Chris Small, Norfolk Youth Offending Team
Jo Sapsford, early intervention and community safety manager

Apologies: Councillors Coleshill and Raby

1. Public questions/petitions

There were no public questions or petitions

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 19 July 2018 and 1 August 2018

4. Norwich City Council response to County Lines activity

(The chair agreed to take this item first)

The chair welcomed Paul Sanford, assistant chief constable and Chris Small, Norfolk youth offending team to the meeting.

The director of neighbourhoods presented the report. He said that County Lines was a national concern for many parts of the country, although the scale of the issue would differ. There had been a high police enforcement response to this activity and the Norfolk Community Safety partnership had adopted county lines as a priority and was working on this with partners.

Paul Sanford gave a presentation to the committee to outline the context of the County Lines operation and the work undertaken by Norfolk Constabulary. He said that this was one of the top operations that had been undertaken in terms of scales and impact.

He explained that County Lines was the serious class A drug dealing with a supply of these drugs being brought into more rural areas using vulnerable people to move them.

The national pattern showed an increase in supply of weapons as well as drugs. It was very difficult for those to escape from the exploitation they were involved in and was also high risk for those individuals. There had been an increase in knife crimes and robberies but these crimes were between drug dealers.

Cuckooing was in issue in Norwich. This was the practice of taking over a vulnerable person's accommodation to use as a base for dealing drugs, usually in return for money or drugs. The vulnerable person could therefore be both a victim and an offender which meant it was sometimes difficult to determine the correct response.

The lines referred to in County Lines were telephone lines used to co-ordinate the selling of drugs and these were operated by large organised crime groups in London or other large urban areas. Once a group was arrested and removed from the area, another group from London would be sent to fill the gap in the market. There had been over seven hundred arrests in two years as part of this operation. The number of lines had currently been reduced to 21 in the area but further work was needed to continue to tackle this problem and work with partners would be key.

Paul Sanford encouraged Norwich City Council to continue to take steps to reduce homelessness as he said that homeless people were vulnerable to this type of crime.

The Youth Offending Team were also working with the police on this operation but were often presented with children who's addresses fell outside of Norfolk which would limit the help they were able to provide. The Norfolk Community Safety Partnership had drafted a County Line strategy for Norwich but enforcement options were needed around child exploitation.

In response to a member's question, Paul Sanford said that about ninety nine percent of the drugs being moved in County lines were class A – namely cocaine and heroin. Chris Small added that not all class A drug users were 'typical' addicts. There was a large recreational market; especially for cocaine which was fed by county lines.

Member discussed child exploitation and the vulnerabilities of children who had been excluded from school. Chris Small said that although exclusions were a vulnerability, there were a variety of reasons why children became involved in in County lines. Usually these children were not drug users themselves and often had no police record. In response to a question about the use of taxis to transport vulnerable people, the director of neighbourhoods added that child sexual exploitation training was given to all Norwich City Council licensed taxi drivers so that they could work effectively with Norfolk Constabulary around this issue.

In response to a member's question, Paul Sanford said that he did not believe that intelligence gathering had been impacted by the removal of PCSOs as most intelligence gathering took place in London or online. There had been an increase in the number of teams enforcing County Lines with the new police model. Some work would not have been able to have been undertaken by PCSOs and in Norwich there had been an increase in PCs who were better equipped to deal with this issue. Chris Small added that it was not just about police on the ground; social media was generating huge amounts of intelligence. The director of neighbourhoods said that the council's housing officers could also feedback intelligence and there was some work needed with contractors going into council properties to do the same.

Members discussed the importance of reporting information and the role that ward councillors had in doing this. Paul Sanford said that Crimestoppers could be used for anonymous reporting, there was a button on the constabulary's website for reporting or councillors or members of the public could ring 101 or 999 if it was an emergency. He said that there had been a huge increase in 999 calls and therefore if online reporting was appropriate, the police would encourage this above making a telephone call. When a report was made, it would feed into the intelligence.

In response to a member's question, Chris Small said that he was aware that a training programme around this topic was being developed to deliver to staff in schools in Norwich. The Police had also paid for a drama performance to be delivered to high schools in the county. Paul Sanford said that the safer schools provision was planning additional activities over the coming year using the limited resources they had. The early intervention and community safety manager added that part of the work of a task and finish group looking at County Line was around how to get the message out to all possible groups which may have contact with vulnerable children and agreed that social media would be a good platform for this.

Members discussed working with various partners to raise awareness and gather intelligence. The director of neighbourhoods said that there had been a programme of raising awareness around safeguarding with service delivery partners and this would always need to be refreshed and reinforced. Paul Sanford said that in relation to licenced premises, the business community would need to work with police to gather evidence around dealing and that any concerns about taxis or taxi drivers should always be reported to the licensing team at the local authority.

In response to a member's question, the early intervention and community safety manager said that there was currently a review being undertaken to replace the CCTV system which had been designed in consultation with stakeholders such as the police.

The director of neighbourhoods said that there were several challenges being faced by the council. As a council with retained council housing, there was a role for Norwich City Council as a landlord to be aware of County Lines activity and the possibility of vulnerable tenants being cuckooed. There may be a need to introduce flexibility with other district councils to accommodate care leavers and vulnerable adults away from the influence of County Lines activities. When estates and public areas were being cleaned by the council's contractors, the mapping of drug paraphernalia found is being mapped to feed into intelligence gathering.

The chair suggested that members formulate recommendations and bring them to the October meeting of the scrutiny committee. The director of neighbourhoods said that members may wish to consider the following points:

- How intelligence gathered from staff and contractors around County Lines activity could be packaged and shared with partners
- Whether licensing policy and procedures are capturing County Lines activity as a specific issue
- How information is made available to ward councillors
- The creation of a brief for front line staff, contractors and local businesses on County Lines activity
- The specific role of contractors in intelligence gathering.

RESOLVED to ask members to formulate recommendations to be discussed at the October meeting of the scrutiny committee.

The chair thanked Paul Sanford, Chris Small and Jo Sapsford for attending the meeting.

5. Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee update

The NHOSC representative said that two items had been considered at the last meeting of the committee.

The first was a consultation by the Norwich Clinical Commissioning Group on 'A New Model of Care for Norwich'. He said that the consultation was about sharing information across services to improve efficiency. Efforts had been made to try and make the consultation accessible to all but the three roadshows which had been held had seen poor attendance with between 2 and 6 people attending. The outcome of the consultation would be brought to a later meeting on NHOSC.

The second item was around physical health checks for those with learning disabilities. The target figure for these was 100 percent but only around 50 percent had received the health check. This was due to the health check being entirely voluntary. One Norwich practice had seen sixty five out of the sixty seven eligible patients as that had a specialist nurse to see these patients in their own home, in a quiet setting or at weekends. He said that NHOSC had asked for the number of patients given the health check from all Norwich practices to be considered at a meeting.

RESOLVED to note the update of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee representative.

6. Scrutiny committee work programme 2018-19

The chair presented the report and members discussed requests for items to be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) add the following items to the scrutiny committee work programme 2018-19:
 - a) Consideration of a response to the Norfolk County Council proposal to close some children's centres (October meeting)
 - b) Anti-social behaviour
 - c) Transport for Norwich
- (2) Remove the item on parks and open spaces from the February 2019 meeting

CHAIR