OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2018
(FROM 5.30 PM TO 7.10 PM)

PRESENT: Councillor Philip Broadbank in the Chair. Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Bernard Bateman, Paul Haslam, Sue Lumby, Pat Marsh, Samantha Mearns, Ann Myatt, Norman Waller, Tom Watson.

In attendance: Councillor Mike Chambers, Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities

Late Arrivals: None

Early Departures: None

45/18 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES: Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Nick Brown and John Mann. Notification had been received that Councillor Paul Haslam was to act as substitute for Councillor Nigel Middlemass.

(5.30 pm)

46/18 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were no declarations of interest.

(5.30 pm)

47/18 – MINUTES: The Minutes of the meeting of 3 September 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Nine Members voted for the motion and there was one abstention)

(5.32 pm)

48/18 – EXEMPT INFORMATION: There were no exempt information items.

(5.33 pm)

49/18 – PUBLIC ARRANGEMENTS – QUESTIONS: There were no questions to consider under Standing Order 27.

(5.33 pm)

CRIME AND DISORDER MATTERS

50/18 – NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE UPDATE: The Chair welcomed Inspector Penny Taylor, the Police Inspector for Harrogate to provide an update to the Commission on the work of North Yorkshire Police in the District. The Chair also welcomed Councillor Mike Chambers, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities and Julia Stack, the Community Safety and CCTV Manager who were also present for the item. The Scrutiny, Governance and Risk Manager submitted a
written report which gave details of the latest performance which was based on information provided by North Yorkshire Police.

The Police Inspector provided an overview of crime in the Harrogate district and stated that overall there had been 788 more crimes this period than this time last year, which represented 23% increase. Most areas in the District had seen an increased level of crimes, although arson and criminal damage and burglary had decreased.

The Police Inspector reported that drug trafficking and possession of offensive weapons/seizures had increased and was largely due to “County Lines” issues. This referred to the instances when drug dealers in metropolitan areas targeted vulnerable or young people to deliver drugs in rural/suburban areas. This was a sophisticated process which utilised mobile phones and targeted young and vulnerable people who sell drugs on behalf of the dealers in an area. It also included “cuckooing” whereby drug dealers would take over a vulnerable person’s home and deal from that address. It was stated this was a worrying trend and was occurring in Harrogate and Ripon. A team had been established in April 2018 to tackle this issue which had led to 40-50 arrests, including 11 charges for drug offences and possession of weapons. In terms of Neighbourhood Policing, there had been 8 referrals from the national referral unit, which identified vulnerable people who were at risk of becoming involved in drug trafficking.

The Commission were then presented with a video created by the Harrogate District Community Safety Hub which showed the impact of becoming involved in drug trafficking across County Lines. It was agreed that the Community Safety and CCTV Manager would share a link to the video with the Commission. The Commission was advised that it was due to be shown at eight school’s parent’s evenings to raise awareness of the issue. In response to a question from Councillor Pat Marsh about the support provided for parents with children involved in drugs, the Police Inspector stated that there were a number of organisations and charities that were available to provide support, which the police and other agencies can refer to. It was highlighted that the issue of county lines had also been addressed in a number of TV programmes recently.

The Police Inspector referred to the National Week of Action (week beginning 8th October 2018) that was being led by the National Crime Agency to tackle the issue of County Lines. In North Yorkshire, work would be undertaken to support this such as press releases, visiting vulnerable people and stands in Harrogate train station. The Police Inspector reported that Harrogate was impacted by West Yorkshire for the trafficking of drugs and that good work was underway to tackle the issue. She wanted to make it as difficult as possible to sell drugs in the Harrogate District. In response to a question from Councillor Sue Lumby regarding raising awareness of the issue with children in schools, the Community Safety and CCTV Manager advised that programmes were developed in conjunction with North Yorkshire County Council to work with children and parents via the schools collaborative.

In response to a question from Councillor Tom Watson about selling knives at car boot sales the Police Inspector agreed to follow this up at the particular site. In response to a further question about follow up and feedback to issues highlighted at
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Safer Neighbourhood meetings the Police Inspector agreed to follow this up with the local police officers that attended.

The Police Inspector stated that she was the single point of contact (SPOC) for fraud in the Harrogate, Richmondshire and Craven areas particularly around fraud against vulnerable people. This role was to ensure that members of the public and banks were educated and aware of the potential of being victims of fraud. Although the majority of victims were elderly, young people were targeted via the internet and phone calls. A team was in place (predominantly Police Community Support Officers (PCSO’s)) to deliver talks regarding fraud in community centres such as churches and elderly people’s homes. Other work was on-going to tackle fraud in the District such as visiting banks and vulnerable people, providing immediate responses and information on the latest scams via leaflets. There had been 52 victims of fraud but this had resulted in £1,000’s of lost money. It was suggested by the Commission that leaflets could be put in Post Offices and the Police Inspector agreed to follow this up. It was also suggested that a similar video to the County Lines one could be developed for fraud and the Police Inspector agreed to follow this up.

The Police Inspector provided an update on anti-social behaviour at the Hydro and stated that this had deteriorated over the summer period with police vehicles being targeted by groups of up to 30 young people. Significant resources had been deployed in the community to improve the situation. This included a clear up of the site, use of CCTV and improved lighting and positive policing which had led to a number of arrests, seizure of an off-road bike and the use of acceptable behaviour contracts with young people. Councillor Paul Haslam informed the Commission that these issues had been brought up at the Coppice Valley Residents Association and that this group may be able to assist in highlighting the problem.

In response to a question from Councillor Philip Broadbank regarding police officers and PCSOs for specific wards and maintaining contact with Councillors, the Police Inspector stated that there was an expectation for newly-qualified Police Officers to connect with important contacts in their areas such as Councillors. Councillor Pat Marsh highlighted the need for regular communication with Police Officers in their wards. In response to a question from Councillor Margaret Atkinson regarding the attendance of Police Officers at Parish Council meetings, the Police Inspector stated that it was not possible for them to attend every meeting as there had been a significant increase in demand on resources but that local teams should be able to attend when requested.

In response to a question from Councillor Bernard Bateman regarding vehicle offences referred to in the report, the Police Inspector stated that this was the numbers of vehicles broken into overnight and approximately 50% related to vehicles left insecurely. In response to questions regarding street lighting, the Community Safety and CCTV Manager stated that the council is consulted regarding lighting remaining on after 12pm. In response to a question on whether there was a direct correlation between the levels of street lighting and crimes, the Police Inspector stated that crimes regularly occurred earlier in the evening despite lighting being switched off at 12pm.
Councillor Bernard Bateman raised the issue of the policy for the placement and use of mobile police speed cameras and it was agreed that this would be a question for the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) when she attended the Commission later in October.

The Police Inspector reported that proactive work was underway in Ribston to deal with vehicle crimes at the MOTO garage where heavy goods vehicles were being damaged and items stolen. This had led to four arrests from the West Yorkshire area. A number of recent police operations were highlighted such as Operation Fizzle which targeted boy racers in Ripon, Operation Corn which targeted suspicious activity near Menwith Hill and Operation Eye which provided education/enforcement in regards to zig zag lines at rural primary schools. Also highlighted was police work to increase visibility at events for public safety purposes such as the Harrogate Christmas market.

In response to a question from Councillor Pat Marsh regarding whether the increased levels of crime was due to not having enough resources, the Police Inspector advised that it was a combination of issues including better recording of crimes, general crime increases and recruitment issues. The Police Inspector stated that the police were doing a better job at responding to crime effectively to deliver the best service for the community. It was agreed that there would be a discussion regarding the performance information provided by the Police and whether this could be improved; possible improvements could include changes to reflect the new ward boundaries and the inclusion of detection rates. It was agreed that once requirements had been identified the Police Inspector would follow this up with the Police Performance Team.

(5.34 pm – 6.18 pm)

51/18 – HARROGATE DISTRICT COMMUNITY SAFETY GROUP UPDATE: The Chair welcomed Councillor Mike Chambers, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities and Julia Stack, the Community Safety and CCTV Manager, who submitted a written report providing an update to the Commission on the Harrogate District Community Safety Group (“the Group”). The Commission was advised that the Group had changed to half yearly meetings, reviewed its Terms of Reference and had in place agreed priorities for 2018/19. This included the delivery of a Cannabis Action Plan which brings together partners across the District to tackle the issue of cannabis. The Group’s other priorities for the year ahead were a review of Alcohol Restricted Zones in Harrogate and Ripon, anti-social behaviour at the Hydro, and exploring funding opportunities to maximise the resources available.

The Cabinet Member reported that the Community Safety Hub (“the Hub”) was proving a useful tool in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour and was viewed as an example of best practice across North Yorkshire. The Hub was developing a suite of KPI’s which would be adopted across the county, with the Harrogate District Hub leading this work. The Commission was advised that 63 referrals had been made to the Hub since 2016, with 61 of these being adopted.

Questions were then invited. In response to a question from Councillor Nigel Middlemass regarding the operation of the Hub, the Community Safety and CCTV
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Manager stated that it met fortnightly, included timed agendas and had active engagement with the council’s partners, including mental health services. In response to a question from Councillor Pat Marsh regarding the procurement of a case management system, the Community Safety and CCTV Manager advised that currently cases were documented through the use of word documents with a summary of the case and actions. The case management system would allow for tasks to be delegated, greater integration and increased efficiencies. At this stage, it would only be accessible to the police and local authorities but work was underway to provide other partners access.

An update was provided by the Cabinet Member on the North Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel as the council’s representative. The Commission was advised that the meeting scheduled for 20 September 2018 was postponed and would be held at a later date. This would include the transfer of governance of the Fire and Rescue Service to the Police and Crime Commissioner, which would lead to two Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority being fully constituted Members of the Panel. The Panel will become the Police, Crime and Fire Panel.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and the Community Safety and CCTV Manager for their attendance and congratulated them on the film produced by the Hub which was presented to the Commission regarding drug trafficking.

(6.31 pm – 6.50 pm)

SCRUTINY MATTERS AND REVIEWS UNDERTAKEN BY THE COMMISSION

52/18 – FEEDBACK FROM OTHER COMMITTEES AND EXTERNAL BODIES:

(1) North Yorkshire County Council’s Scrutiny of Health Committee – The Council’s representative on North Yorkshire County Council’s (NYCC) Scrutiny of Health Committee, Councillor Ann Myatt, provided an update to the Commission following the meeting held on 14 September 2018.

Councillor Ann Myatt discussed a number of key issues that were raised at the meeting and in particular those which may have an impact on the Harrogate district. It was noted that across the North Yorkshire health service there were financial pressures and staffing issues in regards to recruitment and retention.

The Commission was provided with an update on mental health issues in relation to the report from the Police and Crime Commissioner which considered changes in legislation for section 136 of the Mental Health Act. This considered the increased demands the police were facing in dealing with people with mental health crises. It was reported that the police provided street triage services which aim to reduce the number of people detained under section 136; however there is currently no provision for this in Harrogate. Mental health provision in Harrogate is supported by the SAFE (Service to Assist those Facing Exclusion), which is commissioned via the council. The Commission raised concerns regarding the potential loss of mental health beds at the Briary Wing at Harrogate Hospital and the progress being made with building of a mental health in-patient unit at the Cardale Park site in Harrogate.
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It was agreed that the Chair of the Commission would discuss this with the Chair of the NYCC Scrutiny of Health Committee.

(6.50 pm – 6.57 pm)

53/18 – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME: The Scrutiny, Governance and Risk Manager submitted a written report presenting the current draft Work Programme for the Commission. It was noted that the Freedom of Information Review draft report would be considered on 16 November 2018.

The Chair of the Customer Services Task and Finish Group, Councillor Paul Haslam, provided an update following the first meeting that was held on 27 September 2018. It was noted that the scope of the piece of work was agreed and would include four strands; customer services for members of the public, Councillors, the council’s partners and internally. The Task and Finish Group had requested data on customer service provided by services and departments which would be used to narrow the scope of work. It was also advised that it was Customer Service Week and Councillors were invited to attend the Customer Services Unit.

(6.57 pm – 7.08 pm)

MATTERS HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE/PARTNERS TO ACCOUNT

54/18 – FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS: Members considered the latest Forward Plan of key decisions.

(7.08 pm – 7.10 pm)