

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 30 March 2017**

#### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.22pm

#### **\*47 Public speaking**

There were no questions from members of the public.

#### **\*48 Minutes**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 2 March 2017 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

#### **\*49 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Darryl Nicholas: minute 55; personal interest; works for New Devon CCG.

#### **\*50 Mental Health Services for East Devon**

The Committee was reminded that the Chairman of the Honiton Hospital League of Friends and the Honiton Dementia Action Alliance had asked the Committee to consider the current state of services in the district. This request was as a result of the imminent closure of 'the Haven', Honiton, run by MIND and the transfer of the East Devon Community Mental Health Team from Honiton to Exeter.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. that this topic be considered at a future meeting of the Committee – at the earliest opportunity;
2. that the Chairman write to the Portfolio Holder, Stuart Barker, at Devon County Council, to advise that the Committee wished to debate the current state of mental health services in the district and ask him and officers to attend, giving him the chance to respond;
3. that the Chairman write to the Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to advise of the Committee's intended debate on mental health service issues in the district and invite his attendance to respond in respect of the allocation of resources for health services.

The aim would be for the item to be included on the agenda of the next Committee meeting of 9 May 2017 subject to responses received – resolutions 2 and 3 above refer.

#### **\*51 Modern Day Slavery**

The Committee received a verbal presentation on modern day slavery from Inspector Julian Pezzani. This was a global problem and, now estimated to be the second largest illicit trade worldwide. Inspector Pezzani gave statistical information on modern slavery's prevalence in the UK. However, he advised that this was also a local problem across all sectors of the economy but particularly within hospitality and agriculture. An example given in the South West was industrial cannabis manufacture. Victims earned their captors thousands of pounds; their heinous crimes needed to be addressed.

The police service across the UK was committed to combating modern day slavery. Work was been undertaken by the police in partnership with the government, other law enforcement agencies and partnerships (significantly including the voluntary sector) to improve the response to modern day slavery. For the police, the overriding focus was to

improve its ability to identify, rescue and support victims and in doing so ensuring that perpetrators were brought to justice. The perpetrators were often involved in other crimes including drugs firearms, money laundering and child abuse.

The initiative was supported through the Modern Slavery Bill legislation, which provided law enforcement agencies in the UK with greater opportunities and stronger framework to protect victims, bring offenders to justice and recover illicit assets. As modern day slavery was a hidden crime, the police had to act proactively to increase the detection rate. The complex legislation now covered child trafficking, forced labour/debt bondage, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation (the most prevalent crime in this area where trafficked individuals were forced to carry out illegal acts) and domestic servitude. When an offence was discovered, there was a set legislative procedure in place to protect the victim. However adult victims had to consent to action being carried out – there was often reluctance on their part to come forward.

Addressing modern day slavery had significant government commitment supported by funding and a national action plan. Issues faced included:

- Un-reporting – victims can be unwilling to assist with investigations due to being manipulated by their abusers.
- Complex investigations – the perpetrators are very wily and so significant resource (including time) was required in identifying and investigating the crime.
- Recognising that, although involved in illegal trade, the modern day slave is a victim.
- The problem needed to be tackled though all partners working together.
- Trafficking had an impact on local services and included risks to local communities.

The police needed help in increasing general awareness and council support particularly in the early days following a rescue when victims needed accommodation.

Following the presentation, the Committee raised a number of issues including:

- Was there a manned confidential telephone number that members of the public could use to report concerns? Inspector Pezzani advised that the 101 service was improving but noted comments made at the meeting on its inadequacy. The default position was 'crimestoppers' (0800 555111) – operators had specific training on hidden crime which included domestic violence and modern day slavery. Alternatively, there was a national intelligence bureau form for organisations to enable intelligence to be shared.
- What was the level of co-operation on an international scale? Inspector Pezzani advised that new issues would need to be faced now that Britain was leaving the European Union. The British police had a good track record of procedures and worked closely with the International Crime agency.
- Would legalising growing cannabis make the problem of industrial manufacture easier to deal with? Inspector Pezzani did not think that such a change in legislation would help. The Devon and Cornwall Police was making good progress in identifying victims, filtering the exploiters from the victims when an illegal operation was detected. The police wanted to deal with modern day slavery issues as a whole and would hesitate to support the legalisation of cannabis.
- The Home Secretary had asked for additional funding. How could this impact on other police services? Inspector Pezzani advised that tackling modern day slavery

was complex and expensive, particularly when on an international scale. Local policing was fundamental to tackling modern day slavery in the area. A national modern slavery team was being set up in Exmouth to look at crime patterns and best policing practice. This small team was to be drawn from forces all over the country – all forces would be able to tap into this knowledge.

- It would be useful for all Councillors to have documents or briefing notes to increase general awareness. What signs should everyone be aware of? What can the Council do to help? Inspector Pezzani advised that Torbay Council had a draft toolkit prepared for their staff. When this document was signed off, it would be circulated to authorities across Devon – the toolkit included signs and symptoms to look out for. Gerry Moore advised that the Community Safety Partnership had run events to increase awareness and that he would circulate these slides to Councillors.
- Were the victims initially accommodated in safe houses following their rescue? Inspector Pezzani advised that he was not aware of any safe houses in the Devon and Cornwall area. Ideally, he would like to see victims accommodated outside the immediate area to get them away from those who have exploited them – so that a Devon victim was initially accommodated in Cornwall, for example.
- There appeared to be an increase in the number of people (often young) begging in Exeter and an increase in people sleeping rough. Inspector Pezzani agreed that there were instances of aggressive begging linked with modern day slavery.
- All Members should be enlightened and made more aware. If Councillors were better informed, they may be more likely to support a safe house.
- Inspector Pezzani was unable to comment on the penalties imposed due to the range of levels of crime involved but that it was usual for a custodial sentence to be given to a trafficker.
- Does trafficking into the UK mean that people are smuggled in without passports? Inspector Pezzani advised that nationally this was the case. There were concerns that now that borders controls had been tightened around the usual traffic routes that the traffickers may start to look for less obvious routes and this would make the South West coastline vulnerable.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Pezzani for his informative presentation. The Council would look into possible awareness training for all Councillors through Democratic Services.

**RESOLVED** that modern day slavery awareness training be arranged for all Councillors with the slides from the recent awareness session, organised by Gerry Moore, the Council's Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer being circulated in the meantime.

**\*52 Report from East Devon District Council's Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer**

The Chairman welcomed Gerry Moore, Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer to the meeting.

Members noted the current priorities of the East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership for 2016/2017 and additional priorities for 2017/2018. The report outlined the Partnership projects and initiatives, in place and planned, to achieve these priorities.

Committee members were invited to attend the Partnership's Annual Conference at Broadclyst Victory Hall on 5 April – this year Alison Hernandez, the Police and Crime Commissioner would be speaking at the event.

Gerry Moore advised that there was a legal responsibility for the work of each Community Safety Partnership across the county to be subjected to a scrutiny process but the current joint arrangement with Mid Devon was proving ineffective. He suggested that as an alternative, the Community Safety Officer for each authority report direct to meetings of the Scrutiny Committee – either six-monthly or annually - with reports focusing on East Devon.

Issues raised by members of the Committee included:

- The Parishes Together Fund had supported the funding request for a hard-hitting play called Chelsea's Choice about child sexual exploitation to be performed at the eight secondary schools across the district.
- Boy-racers continued to be a problem in Exmouth. Although they were not always breaking the speed limit, the high revs and noise were generating on-going public complaints. A speed awareness group would be supported by the Police but only in daylight hours for safety reasons. Gerry Moore advised that the Council had been requested to impose specific public spaces orders to help tackle the issue as this would give the police greater powers to act. Cabinet had already supported the request; the next step was public consultation. The police had not been made aware of a greater increase in incidents of boy-racing but suggested that there could be under-reporting. He believed that a volunteer group would be helpful.

Chief Inspector Sarah Johns acknowledged the police resource issue but confirmed that a full team of officers was working across the district throughout the night. She also acknowledged the depth of feeling in respect of boy-racers and that the police would benefit from the public space restriction orders. The Chief Inspector advised that she would investigate support that could be given to a speed-watch group in Exmouth and possible training.

The Chairman thanked Gerry Moore and Chief Inspector Sarah Johns for their attendance and contribution.

**RESOLVED** that the Council's Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer be invited to meetings of the Scrutiny Committee on a six-monthly basis to present his report on community safety activity within East Devon.

### **\*53 Scrutiny Forward Plan**

The forward plan was noted. The following comments were made:

Manor Pavilion car parking arrangements – being referred to April Cabinet.

NHS Property Services – correspondence had been received – the Chairman would continue to push for representatives to address a future meeting.

New Devon Clinical Commissioning Group – useful update was needed.

Thelma Hulbert Gallery – progress – Officer advice was that this was not an appropriate item for this Committee.

Local Plan – processes – Officers had advised at a previous meeting that this was not an appropriate issue for the Scrutiny Committee; site identification had now gone through the Strategic Planning Committee. However, issues around the call for sites may need to be considered.

Sports Club rents – on-going issue. Cabinet was discussing the Playing Field Strategy – as Scrutiny was retrospective, it was unable to deal with this on-going issue. The Sports Champion was working with Officers on this matter.

Possible charging organisers for Streetscene clean-up after events had been discussed at the joint meeting of Scrutiny and Overview Committees in January. Charges needed to be fully assessed and balanced with the economic benefits from staging the events. This possible new charge would not be introduced in April this year but would be reviewed for possible inclusion in the future - it would be an Overview Committee matter until a decision was made.

**Attendance list (present for all or part of the meeting):**

**Scrutiny Members present:**

Roger Giles  
Alan Dent  
Dean Barrow  
Maddy Chapman  
Bruce de Saram  
Cathy Gardner  
Simon Grundy  
Marcus Hartnell  
Bill Nash  
Cherry Nicholas  
Darryl Nicholas  
Val Ranger  
Marianne Rixson

**Other Members**

Megan Armstrong  
David Barratt  
John Dyson  
Peter Faithfull  
Dawn Manley  
Tom Wright

**Officers present:**

Jaye Lambe, Service Lead – Regeneration and Property  
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor  
Diana Vernon, Democratic Services Manager

**Apologies:**

Jill Elson

Chairman ..... Date.....