

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2019

Present:

Councillor Kevin Tait (Chair)
Councillor Oscar Gomez Reaney (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Joseph Birkin
Councillor Mark Foster

Councillor Lilian Deighton
Councillor Jeff Lilley

Also Present:

K Hanson Joint Strategic Director – Place (for Min No 379)
K Shiliitto Principal Solicitor (for Min No 380)
A Pogorzelec Licensing Manager – Rotherham Borough Council (for Min No 380)
D Stanton Governance Officer
S Veerman Overview and Scrutiny Manager

376 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor R Hall.

377 Declarations of Interest

Members are requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest and/or other interest, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

378 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 13 September 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

379 Previous Review - Domestic Abuse

The Joint Strategic Director – Place updated Members on progress against the Action Plan from the previous Scrutiny Review into Domestic Abuse, and to clarify the next stages in the implementation of the Plan.

The Committee heard that a previous Scrutiny Review had identified a Domestic Abuse Action Plan. Following a Senior Management Restructure, the Head of Service responsible for implementing the Action Plan had left the authority, and this was now being reinstated by Cabinet.

Members were pleased to see that the Action Plan was being moved forward for Cabinet approval, and thanked officers for their work. The Committee reiterated

that there was different types of domestic abuse, and it was vital the Council had a clear plan in place to help and support victims.

Members had a wide ranging discussion about the merits of appointing a dedicated lead officer, and raised concerns about duplicating the provisions of Derbyshire County Council in the event service users became confused about the services provided. The Committee agreed that clarity and consistency was needed for the support service to be effective.

There was a consensus that an internal policy would allow staff to sign post those suffering from domestic abuse in the right direction, as well as help employees who may be victims themselves.

The Committee agreed that they would like to make further progress against the Domestic Abuse Action Plan. The Director would be invited to a future meeting to update on progress.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

380 CCTV in Taxis

Principal Solicitor

The Principal Solicitor attended the meeting first to discuss CCTV in taxis.

Members heard that the Principal Solicitor had held meetings with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, the Licensing Committee Chair, the Environmental Health Manager and the Licensing Team Leader. It was stated that a timetable had been drafted and that information was currently being gathered, as well as discussions on the proposed policy with other local authorities.

The Officer agreed that it was a policy that could be used to protect both the public and drivers. Members heard, however, that the Officer had some legal reservations and was awaiting the outcome of a recent case.

Members discussed the potential problems of CCTV installation, which included who took control of the footage and the ability of drivers to obtain a licence at a different authority and still operate in North East Derbyshire. It was stated that the Information Commissioner had raised concerns with some aspects of the CCTV policies in other authorities, and the Principal Solicitor did not want North East Derbyshire District Council to be drawn into an expensive court case.

The Officer concluded that there needed to be a strong evidence base to support those policies.

The Committee felt and agreed that it was in the public interest to install CCTV and that it could be crucial in preventing serious crimes. Members were reminded that there had been a previous Scrutiny review on Safeguarding where CCTV installation in taxis had been recommended.

Members thanked the Officer for attending the meeting.

The Officer then left the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

Licensing Manager – Rotherham Borough Council

The Rotherham Borough Council (RBC) Licensing Manager attended to discuss CCTV in taxis, and informed Members of the policy that was currently in place at RBC.

The Committee heard that there had been an initial resistance from the trade to the installation of CCTV in taxis, however, it had proved a success in Rotherham. The Officer used a number of examples where CCTV had proved beneficial, and stated that there was now an understanding that the cameras were there to protect both the passenger and driver. The RBC Licensing Manager informed Members that there had been a change in attitude towards CCTV within his Council's area and that the public now expected it to be installed in taxis. The Officer hoped that similar policies could be put in place in local authorities around the country.

Members noted that there had been some technical issues with the cameras, and if a similar policy was to be enforced by NEDDC it would be beneficial to identify a single supplier. The Committee had a wide ranging discussion on the CCTV arrangements, which included the visual cameras being turned off when the vehicle was being used for personal use, and the ability of the passenger and driver to turn audio sound on. The Officer stated that the Council controlled the data, and was kept for up to 14 days.

Members heard that the Information Commissioner had problems with the initial policy, however, following consultation this had now been resolved and the policy in place at RBC was working well.

The RBC Licensing Manager informed Members that in his view the public felt safer, and had restored some trust in the profession following the child exploitation scandals. It was stated that the authority was able to revoke licences if there was any issue, as there was real evidence to draw on.

Members noted that the use of cameras needed to be proportionate and justified as to why they were necessary.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reminded the Committee of the role and remit of Scrutiny, and Members discussed the merits of a Special Meeting to further discuss CCTV in taxis.

Members thanked the Officer for attending the meeting.

The Officer then left the meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That a Special Meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee be arranged to further discuss CCTV in taxis.

(2) That the update be noted.

381 List of Key Decisions

The Committee considered Issue No 90 of the List of Key Decisions which set out the major decisions being taken over the next few months.

RESOLVED – That the List of Key Decisions, Issue No 90 be noted.

382 Scrutiny Work Programme

Members were reminded of the new Residential Parking Strategy and the invitations to four Town and Parish Councils to have their say on Residential Parking. All four Councils had responded and were being invited to the next scheduled meeting to present their views.

RESOLVED – That the Communities Scrutiny Work Programme 2019-20 be noted.

383 Additional Urgent Items (if any)

There were no additional urgent items to be discussed at this meeting.

384 Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee would take place on Friday, 17 January 2020 at 10.00 am in Chamber 1, District Council Offices, 2013 Mill Lane, Wingerworth.
