

## **CUSTOMER, COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 18 July 2018 at 6.00pm in Meeting Rooms G3/4, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford**

**Present:** Councillors G C W Reynolds (Chair), C N Mason, L A Murray, J M Seymour and B D Tillotson

**In Attendance:** Supt T Harding (Chair of the Community Safety Partnership), A Matthews (Prevention and Protection Officer, Shropshire Fire & Rescue), and D Moseley (Democratic & Scrutiny Services Team Leader)

#### **CCPSC-1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillors J C Ashford, K R Guy and Mr D Johnson (Co-Optee)

#### **CCPSC-2 Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **CCPSC-3 Minutes**

Members requested that the updates on the Grounds and Cleansing Contract procurement and Highways Contract procurement be recirculated.

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Customer, Community & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on 16 October 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

#### **CCPSC-4 Community Safety Partnership**

The Chair referred Members to the Safer Telford and Wrekin Strategy 2017-19 which had been circulated with the agenda and noted that the strategy had been approved by Full Council on 11 January 2018. The Chair noted that Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) were introduced by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and were constituted of a number of 'responsible authorities' working together to protect their local communities from crime. Local Authorities had the power to scrutinise the CSP and to this end, Councillor Reynolds welcomed Superintendent Tom Harding as the Chair of the CSP and invited him to provide an overview of the Strategy.

Superintendent Harding explained that previous strategies had been very broad and the framework of the Strategy before Members offered the opportunity to deliver real benefits by bringing forward specific priorities for focus over a two year period. Telford & Wrekin was part of a 'similar group' consisting of 15 areas and, comparatively, had seen a positive trend towards the reduction of crime. It was acknowledged that there would be a significant increase against the 'rape and other sex offences' category but the CSP was keen to articulate to the public that two-thirds of the reports were non-recent offences. Significant work was taking place with

partners to provide increased education relating to CSE vulnerability which encompassed a wide range of individuals including refuse collectors, Royal Mail, hotel workers and the wider public on the signs to look for. This had resulted in reports about young people at risk, some of which had been investigated and others which turned out to be misunderstandings. The level of partnership working had really come on in leaps and bounds and work to reduce environmental crime with the Town and Parish Councils and Environmental Team had broadened the partnership network further.

Members asked a number of questions:-

*How often does the CSP meet?*

CSP meetings took place once per quarter. Sub groups regularly met across a range of activities and duplication with the Adult Safeguarding Board and Local Safeguarding Children Board was avoided.

*The falling rates of crime were welcomed and it was queried whether this was a trend across all areas in the 'similar group'.*

Most of the areas in the similar group had reported an increase so Telford & Wrekin was bucking the trend. However, it was noted that the area was very different to Hereford, Worcester and Shropshire and, whilst the area included some of the most deprived areas in the country, that was no reason not to have high aspirations.

*Shock was expressed at the high figures for theft and violence against the person*

Supt Harding advised that his command priorities were violence and sexual offences and this had resulted in a lot of work taking place with the night time economy. For instance, within the security services, there was now one main door company operating most of the doors and Special Constables were now trained to undertake licence checks. Staff were looking at the issue of domestic abuse nationally and the force was also looking to appoint an Independent Domestic Abuse Adviser to work with the team for 3 days per week. Some positive strides were also taking place to allow greater data sharing on victims of domestic abuse through discussion with the lead consultant for A&E. The close working relationship between the partners and the Council's Housing Enforcement Team had also proved successful.

*Statistics showed 224 incidents of child sexual exploitation. How many of these were ongoing concerns?*

A key indicator was generally how many individuals the CATE team were working with as being at significant risk. The caseload was generally around 40/50 children but referrals generally came from a variety of sources and not all of them would be classed as significant risk.

*Would the Chair of the CSP corroborate with the Independent Local Inquiry on CSE?*

The CSP was open to the Inquiry. The Chair personally would be happy to engage with the Inquiry and was proud of the work the Partnership was doing.

*Has the CSP noted that it is common for victims to withdraw from Domestic Violence cases?*

Domestic Violence was one of the most complex issues to deal with, presenting a real challenge for the Partnership with only 1 in 40 cases being reported (essentially

meaning that abuse occurred 40 times before it was reported). There was under-reporting in more affluent areas and this was in some ways understandable when additional support might be needed if an individual may lose their job and with it the ability to support their family. Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Civil Orders were being utilised more and short term support offered to victims over the period that there was no contact with their abuser as a result. It had to be recognised that criminal justice was not always the best outcome for victims.

*How do the views of local residents feed into the priorities set by the CSP?*

Each of the Partners collected their own data which was shared and, from this pool of data, a professional judgment was taken on what the priorities should be. For instance, the Council was able to gauge public feeling through social media, surveys and other feedback, eg from Members and Town and Parish Councils. It was not believed that the CSP surveying local residents would deliver any more than was already achieved through existing partnership data.

*The use of Body Cameras was welcomed. Were there plans to roll out this technology to Special Constables and PCSOs?*

All uniformed Police Officers were using body cams. The next phase of the roll out would include Special Constables and PCSOs. Body cams were proving useful in a number of ways, not just as a method of collecting evidence which would not normally be available (eg proving offender demeanour) but also through a reduction in assaults and complaints against Officers.

It was pointed out that the Council's Public Protection Enforcement Officers were also using body cams.

Members welcomed a valuable report from the Chair of the CSP and, as required by legislation, indicated that they would not be making any recommendations at this time.

## **CCPSC-5 Tackling Vehicle Damage**

Mr Matthews and Supt Harding provided the Committee with some background detail on the partnership working that was taking place, not just between the Police and Fire Service but also including the Council's Night time Economy Officers and Immigration Officers. This demonstrated the impact that partnership working had due to the pooling of different legislative powers and in order to make the most of resources available (for instance, through training PCSOs to undertake Safe and Well visits).

Mr Matthews explained that over a 12-18 month period, there had been a series of vehicle arsons as described in the scrutiny suggestion. Supt Harding advised that an individual had been charged with nine vehicle arsons and the spate of activity had ceased – a result which demonstrated the fantastic joint investigation which had occurred. Whilst it was not possible to discuss the specifics of this case, the Committee were advised that in these instances, Officers would pick up patterns and trends and then work together on an investigation.

Mr Matthews went on to advise that last year there were 39 deliberate fires in Telford and Wrekin, but this year the figure had reduced by 3. Supt Harding noted that West Mercia had the third lowest level of vehicle offences of the 15 similar group areas with Telford & Wrekin being comparatively low.

Mr Matthews advised the Committee that arson had been recorded as follows

January – 1

February 0

March – 5

April to June 2018 - 11

No trends had been identified and, whilst the Service would like the figures to be lower, it was not currently an issue of concern.

The Committee were advised that figures would include cars which had been used by travelling criminals and may not actually belong to local residents.

*What are the conviction rates for arson?*

Officers did not have conviction figures.

*Is there an arson reduction strategy?*

There is an overall arson strategy and based on the statistics it was working. Campaigns were run throughout the year and would be proactive during the summer holidays. The Service took part in the schools education programme and would visit over 150 schools in years 3 and 6 as part of the national curriculum. The Crucial Crew event had also raised awareness of the danger of playing with fire among 5.5K children. The Service worked with colleagues, eg Environmental Enforcement, as fly tipping presented a risk of fire. The work undertaken by the Council had a positive impact in this regard.

*Small arson prevention signs had been seen in some areas. Would these be rolled out further or available to purchase by Town and Parish Councils?*

It was not planned to erect signs across the area as this could result in a dilution of the message, instead signs were sited based on intelligence/incidents. If Town and Parish Councils had particular concerns about their area, they were welcome to raise these with the Service who could consider the evidence for a need in the area.

*How could abandoned cars be dealt with to prevent the possibility of arson?*

If the vehicle was on private land it was the landowners responsibility; in other cases, the Local Authority had responsibility for recovery of cars with no tax or MOT. Whilst it was noted that seemingly abandoned cars could sometimes be considered a nuisance, it was important to consider whether there was a legal reason they should not be there as recovery was expensive.

*If a person was recognised as a potential arsonist during a call-out, how would they be referred to appropriate mental health services?*

This was another example of a multi-agency approach and a shift in the ways cases were dealt with in comparison to say 20 years ago. In some cases a school would raise concerns or operational crews would provide feedback. The I Learn Scheme provided trained people to work with individuals and concerted efforts would be

made to protect any home at risk through provision of alarms and an appropriate referral for the individual.

*Did the Fire Service still provide smoke alarms in homes?*

The blanket approach to the provision of fire alarms had been reduced due to austerity measures and, following a specific criteria, the focus was now on vulnerable groups. However, general fire safety advice was still available for everyone who requested a Safe and Well check.

*Were businesses' Fire Risk Assessments checked on entering buildings?*

Private companies carried out assessments and these were checked for adequacy during an Inspection but the onus to ensure an adequate assessment was made was on the person responsible for the building. Reasonable adjustments to the standard template could be made eg if the building was single storey with limited occupancy it would not be an onerous assessment.

*What was the approach to inspection of business premises?*

A risk based approach was taken, with the starting point being the most complex buildings which would be visited every 12 months. A member of the team would also attend a premises following reports from the public.

Members thanked representatives from the Fire Service and the Police for attending to provide a reassuring report and decided that no further scrutiny was required at this time.

#### **CCPSC-6    Work Programme**

Members received clarification of the position with regard to Scrutiny's flood risk powers.

The Committee noted the allocation of four formal meetings.

It was suggested that recommendations should be made at formal meetings only and the Chair noted that this was an issue for Scrutiny Management Board to consider.

Members considered the items referred by Scrutiny Management Board and it was:

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a)    that the following items would be prioritised for the work programme in 2018/19:-**
  - (i)    Third Party Engagement (incorporating the new suggestion 'Town and Parish Council Engagement')**
  - (ii)    Anti-Social Behaviour**
  - (iii)    Grounds and Cleansing Service Contract Procurement**
  
- (b)    that the topic 'Housing Standards' be re-submitted for consideration for review in 2019/20;**

- (c) that the holding to account of Highways England by the Cabinet Member: Communities, Housing and Enforcement be supported with regard to fly tipping on Highways England land and an update on any outcomes be provided at a future date;
- (d) that 'Flood Management' not be prioritised for the work programme during 2018/19; and
- (e) that the suggestion 'Transfer of Assets' not be prioritised due to officer capacity and the potential for duplication with Audit.

The meeting ended at 7.32pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** .....