

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Virtual meeting held on Thursday, 22nd July, 2021 at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr S.J. Masterson (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr Jib Belbase
Cllr M.S. Choudhary
Cllr R.M. Cooper
Cllr K. Dibble
Cllr L. Jeffers
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr Nem Thapa

8. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th June, 2021 were **AGREED** as a correct record.

9. COMMUNITY SAFETY AND POLICING - UPDATE

The Committee welcomed Police Inspector Kirsten Troman, Hampshire Police, and David Lipscombe, Senior Community Safety Officer, who were in attendance to provide an update on policing and community safety matters in the Borough. Members had raised a number of issues in advance of the meeting and these were covered in the update provided.

Inspector Troman reported on a number of policing matters, these included:

- Domestic Abuse (DA) – It was noted that DA had been set as a district priority for the past two months in Rushmoor and Hart. Numbers had risen since 2019/20 from 423 DA crimes to 549, showing a 30% increase over two years. However, repeat DA crimes had reduced to 27% below the County average of 36% repeats. Police Constables and Community Support Officers, alongside a Police Sergeant, had been utilised as DA Champions in four neighbourhood hubs in Hart and Rushmoor, and scrutiny and attention in this area would continue.

It was noted that when the consumption of alcohol increased during the European Football Championships and when COVID restrictions had been lifted, DA crime rates had spiked.

- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – Inspector Troman highlighted concerns around young people and the loss of support/diversion through virtual engagement with key workers etc. during the pandemic. The impacts couldn't be quantified, but there was concern around the impacts on those at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation and those with diverse childhood experiences that could likely lead to them becoming involved in crime in the medium term. Links between the police and relevant organisations were in place to understand the gaps in the provision of support for young people and to determine how additional support could be provided by the police, where appropriate.
- Black Lives Matter (BLM) – since the movement began, data had shown an increase in peer on peer racially aggravated hate crimes. However, reporting had increased, which showed an increase in confidence that black peoples' voices were being heard. In response, the Police were carrying out a number of initiatives to engage with schools' charter work on a range of topics, including hate, cyber bullying, sexting, DA, gangs and child exploitation. Other work included engagement with the Rushmoor Secondary Head Teachers' Group to collaborate and try to influence the work around the peer on peer aspects of the issue.
- Violence against women – It was noted that some incidents of sexualised and demeaning behaviour towards women and girls in the work place had been reported. Robust investigation and media engagement to encourage reporting and advice/guidance on identifying such behaviours by both managers/employers and individuals was being implemented.
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse – It was noted that very few most serious violent crimes were associated with licensed premises and overall the night time economy position in the Borough was positive. With regard to the individuals that were street attached, some tactical options were in place to combat ASB. However, none of them would combat the social discomfort that existed in the population when encountering those under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This was a wider issue for society and partnerships to reflect on and influence.
- Crime Rates – Inspector Troman reported on crime data 2019/20 verses 2021/22 (2020/21 figures were considered "skewed" due to the pandemic). A reduction had been seen in vehicle crime, bicycle theft, house burglaries, most serious violence (grievous bodily harm (GBH) and up) and personal robbery. Increases had been seen in serious sexual offences, hate crime, cyber crime and violence with injury.

On the issue of fear of crime, it was noted that the police were ensuring that community priority meetings were held in neighbourhoods bi-annually to inform the public of crime patterns and to hear the voices of the community. Also, through a newly appointed Police Communications Lead, the passing on of positive messages of success and activity to reassure communities was also being implemented.

In relation to staffing, it was noted that a permanent Sergeant had been appointed for Farnborough to start in September, 2021 and a number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) and Police Constables (PC), had joined the team, as part of the force uplift programme.

Mr Lipscombe, advised that since the last time the Community Safety Team had been in front of the Committee, the joint working arrangements with Hart and Basingstoke and Deane (B&D) had been dissolved and the Council's Community Safety Team was now working back in-house under the Place Protection Team managed by James Knight. However, the team continued to work closely with Hart and B&D towards the shared goals of the Joint Community Safety Partnership.

Mr Lipscombe, advised on the current focus of work for the team, it was noted that some of the most significant issues during the pandemic had been neighbour nuisance. Incidents of ASB seemed focused at home between neighbours rather than in the wider community.

Over the summer period, ASB week would take place. This initiative advised on what ASB was and how it could be reported. In addition, a relaunch of the ASB warning slip process had been initiated, this allowed the Council's patrolling officers and police to issue a warning slip if they witnessed ASB, particularly in younger people. If an individual received more than two slips in a certain period of time, a more formal response by the team and partner agencies could commence, which provided a chance to offer support to the individual and their families, if required.

Other key areas of work for the team had included:

- Car meets – significant events had occurred in car parks in the town centre during the spring. Action had been taken to combat and prevent these meets through the installation of gates in two town centre car parks. In addition, a process was underway to implement Public Space Protection Orders on the Council's larger car parks to prohibit this type of behaviour.
- Street Attached - following significant issues in summer 2020, a tactical planning group had been established to address them. It was noted that improvements had been realised but some issues still remained. An action day would take place on 30th July, 2021 at which the Council and Police would spend time in Aldershot Town Centre to conduct environmental visual audits, engagement with shop keepers and licensed premises and address any issues that may arise through the behaviours of the street attached community.
- Community Trigger/Closure Orders – A community trigger was a process that allowed residents to ask for a review of a case they felt had not been resolved. A trigger had been raised in relation to a property owned by VIVID Homes around ASB and, following a multi-agency response, the issue had been resolved. A closure order allowed for a room to be closed in a property due to ASB. The Council was currently progressing its first closure order against a resident who had caused noise nuisance and used threatening behaviour towards other residents in the property. Should the closure be

successful, it would provide a good basis to make use of the power when dealing with anti-social neighbours in the future.

- Cannabis Nuisance – a warning process had been launched in partnership with the police, where up to two warning letters would be sent to those believed to be responsible. Should the issue persist evidence would be gathered, with the assistance of the police, to allow for a Community Protection Warning to be issued, followed by a Community Protection Notice if required. It was noted that most cases were resolved after the initial letter was received.
- ASB Warning Letters – these letters were sent out when an issue had been raised, to groups or individuals affected. Currently, a number of letters had been sent to a group of residents encouraging reporting of any issues, and warning about behaviours within their communities and the consequences.

Mr Lipscombe, advised on what the plan was for the Community Safety Team moving forward. It was noted that it was hoped that a relationship could be forged with the newly appointed Police and Crime Commissioner following a scheduled meeting later in July, 2021. It was also proposed that a refresh of the anti-social behaviour policy would be undertaken and an increase in legal powers would be sought for dealing with individuals and problem areas across the Borough.

It was noted that the Joint Scrutiny Committee had met on the 29th June, 2021. Members had been presented with the Partnership Plan 2020-23 detailing the partnerships priorities which included serious violence, youth related ASB and crime with historically low levels of reporting. It was noted that the work of the Partnership had been endorsed by the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee discussed the reports and raised a number of queries, these included:

- Protests – It was advised that a structure and thought through process was in place at the highest level to deal with protests. The work was challenging and open to national scrutiny and it was important to uphold the human rights of both the protesters and the general public
- Scams – It was noted that Neighbourhood Watch and Citizens' Advice were doing some excellent work in this area to educate and make people aware of scam. Action Fraud was a platform where scams could be reported/recorded to raise awareness. It was suggested that the Council could do more communications around scams and the types of things to look out for.
- Reporting Crime – the Committee discussed the reporting of crime via 101. It was noted that residents showed a lack of confidence in the 101 system and were reluctant to use it to report crime, taking the option to either report it direct to the local beat teams at neighbourhood meetings or to their local councillors. In response, the importance of using 101 to report crime was stressed as it enabled the police to create a picture of what was happening

across the Borough and pick up on “hotspots” and build on evidence to help tackle crime.

- Hate Crime – more details were requested on the types of hate crimes that were increasing and who the victims were. In response, it was noted that reports covered a number of different types but, the data showed that more were racially motivated than religious. There had also been an increase in disability related hate crimes. The peer on peer hate crimes remained the main concern.
- Interventions within Wards – Members requested that consideration be given to involving elected Members more when tackling issues in specific Wards.
- Joint Scrutiny Committee – A query was raised about the purpose of the Joint Committee. Mr Lipscombe advised that different formats had been trialled and Officers were always open to suggestions on how to improve the meeting to make it more effective. Currently the meeting was held annually and it was suggested that more frequent, shorter meetings on specific topics could be trialled.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Troman and Mr Lipscombe for their reports.

10. **PAY POLICY STATEMENT**

Corporate Director, Karen Edwards was in attendance to introduce the item on the Pay Policy Statement, which had been approved at the Council meeting on 24th June, 2021. The Committee had been asked to undertake a review of the structure and application of the Council’s pay policies to ensure that the policies met the requirement of council taxpayers.

The Committee discussed the policy and structure and raised some questions on how the pay policy was implemented. Queries had included:

- Use of contractors/consultant - justification of use and cost, in particular for the first half of the calendar year (2021):
 - How many?
 - Hourly/daily rate?
 - Why consultants and not full time employees? - Is it more cost effective for a short period?
 - What is the procurement process for engaging consultants?
 - How the Council compare to other local authorities on the number of consultants/contractors employed and remuneration levels?
- Data on equalities within the workforce in light of the Equalities and Diversity Review and other employment data. In particular:
 - General work force data to include; gender/age/ethnicity/disability, compared to other local authorities and government requirements
 - Numbers of officers in lower, mid and upper (executive) roles
 - Percentage difference between highest and lowest paid roles?

- Are lower grades employed or recruited through agencies on a temporary basis?
- How benefits such as, pensions, company cars/car allowances, loans are included and how they affect the structure?

It was also suggested that the Council's major contractors (SERCO/ Places Leisure) wage structures could also be considered in the future.

It was **AGREED** that a Working Group would be established to look at the data requested. Appointments for the Group would be made at the next Progress Group and a date confirmed for an initial meeting in September, 2021.

11. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee **NOTED** the current Work Plan.

The next meeting of the Committee would be moved to **24th August, 2021** to accommodate the item requested on the Communication and Education Plan on the new Food Waste Service.

It was proposed that at the December, 2021 meeting a report back on Supporting Communities Strategy and Action Plan would be made, this would involve officer and partner feedback.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

CLLR M.D. SMITH (CHAIRMAN)
