

Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 2 April 2019

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Sara Langdale (Chair)
Cllr Greta Goatley (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Conrad Broadley
Gurdip Ram Bungar
John Caller
Brian Francis
Rob Halpin
Karen Hurdle
Steve Thompson

Simon Hookway Assistant Director (Communities)
Kath Donald Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit)
Sean Steer Community Safety Operations Manager
Lauren Wallis Committee Services Officer (minutes)

55. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Gary Harding.

An apology for absence was also received from Inspector Craig West (Kent Police).

56. Minutes

In relation to Minute 29 of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 October 2018, the Assistant Director (Communities) confirmed that the letter to the Home Office requested by Members had been written and sent by Councillor John Knight, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environmental Services.

The Assistant Director (Communities) also confirmed that the Terms of Reference for the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee had been circulated to Members.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2018 were signed by the Chair.

57. Declarations of Interest

The Chair, Cllr Sara Langdale, declared an "Other Interest" as her daughter was a Police Officer base at the North West Kent Police Station.

58. MHCLG Supporting Families Against Youth Crime

The Committee was apprised of the Kent County Council (KCC) led successful bid to the Government's Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Fund which had secured £1.3m for work to prevent young people becoming involved in gangs and youth violence as part of a two year project.

The Chair welcomed Colin Green, District Partnership Manager – KCC to the meeting.

The District Partnership Manager explained that he worked as part of the Troubled Families Programme (North Kent) team which had noticed an increase in cases of child exploitation. For example, nine children had been excluded from their school as they had been suspected of money laundering for a criminal group in North Kent and research had been undertaken which showed the need for more work in this area. KCC had given permission to submit a bid for funding from the £5m Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Fund made available by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Initially it had been suggested that a bid for £2.1m be made which would have included direct partnership working with a number of London Boroughs. However, due to an imminent restructure of the team at KCC and the opinion that the inclusion in the initial bid of four London Boroughs as strategic partners would complicate matters, it had been requested that the bid be reduced to £1.3m. This bid would include collaboration with Medway Council, Kent Police, the Metropolitan Police and the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner.

The funding would be used in the coming two years to develop a service specification which would include two elements. The first was the development of a care team which would include a project manager, a support officer and an analyst. The second element would be a new commissioning service which would deliver in North Kent and Medway and four mentors and four trained community workers whom the project manager would oversee. Additionally there would also be two youth workers. It was also hoped to have a "community chest" of funding which appropriate community groups would be able to bid for. The District Partnership Manager was also keen to afford an out of hours telephone project. If additional funding could be accessed then a face to face service would be also considered.

The Committee was advised that the new service would be committed to helping 50 families in the coming two years and would also include outreach sessions in schools and to other appropriate groups. A study would also be commissioned to investigate the efficiency of the work being undertaken by the service. It was hoped that the prevention and support work would in turn result in a positive outcome for these young people and their families.

The Chair congratulated KCC on an outstanding project and thanked the District Partnership Manager for the initiative. This sentiment was echoed by the Committee.

The District Partnership Manager fielded questions from the Committee and the following was highlighted:

- The London Boroughs involved as informal partners were Lewisham, Greenwich, Bexley and Southwark. These London Boroughs relocated families at risk from youth crime into North Kent and when this type of move took place it happened immediately and KCC was not always kept informed. It was intended to formalise this process with a protocol as KCC would like to support these families with advice with regards to schooling and housing etc from day one.

- The proximity of the relocated families to London had been raised but it was recognised that trying to manage and mitigate the risk to these families was the most important factor to be taken into account.
- To enable the service to be commissioned, KCC had been in discussion with potential providers. However, one of the risks of more of the government funding being accessed by London Boroughs was that this would attract the attention of the larger national organisations. The District Partnership Manager was not aware of any Kent organisations with the skills or scale-ability to deliver at the pace required by the Government. The Project Manager had been seconded into the team and a short procurement route introduced so KCC could get up to speed quickly and it was intended that the project would go live in July or August 2019.
- It was noted that there would be a preventative element and it was hoped that 25 training sessions would be delivered by April 2020.
- The Community Chest initiative would also go live in July or August 2019.
- It was hoped that the project team would not have to set targets for specific areas of North Kent as this might curtail help and support being given to the most at risk families. It was also hoped that a case length need not be applied although it was recognised that the team would probably be able to work with families for up to 12 months.
- It was intended to undertake a mapping and profiling exercise with Kent Police. The analyst would also develop a risk logic profile for high risk families which would be criteria and point weighted.
- Partnership working between Dartford and Gravesham was considered to be strong. Councillor Paul Carter – Leader of the County Council and Cabinet Member for Health Reform wanted to establish select committee and Public Health was already on board and the District Partnership Manager was confident that it would get the support it needs. A statutory duty for schools to report youth violence was also being introduced.
- Following a question on sustainability, it was explained that the original project had included four London Boroughs and had been favourably looked upon and the £5m pot had been doubled to £10m by the Government in recognition of the scale of the problem. Full advantage would be taken of future funding opportunities and there was a reasonable likelihood that these would arise.
- Members were advised that collaboration with the Kent Police and Crime Commissioners was yet to be explored and was an outstanding action.

The Chair thanked the District Partnership Manager for a fascinating and comprehensive presentation and requested that the subject be revisited by the Committee in a year.

The Committee was asked to note the contents of the briefing document.

59. Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Strategy 2019-22 - Priorities

Members were apprised of the Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) new three year Community Safety Strategy 2019-22 and the priorities contained therein. The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) advised that the first stage had included a strategic assessment. Once this assessment had been completed, a very brief public consultation exercise had taken place in an effort to clarify resident's concerns with regard to their neighbourhoods and 420 responses had been received. There had been a clear indication of priorities which had included anti-social behaviour (mainly low level but

persistent), petty vandalism, litter and graffiti. Residential burglary and town centre safety had also been flagged. A low level of concern about violence had been expressed. In identifying priorities officers consider certain criteria including volume, trends and the added value that could be provided through partnership working. Members noted that it had been difficult to undertake year on year comparisons of recorded crime because of changes in Home Office Counting Rules and definitions but year on year analysis should begin to be possible from 2019/2020 onwards.

The Strategy would be published on the Council's website in mid-April and would run for 3 years. The Strategy had been designed to be able to respond to changes in trends and legislation etc and the Members' attention was drawn to the diagram on page 17 of the agenda which was used to communicate the aims of the Strategy to members of the public. Performance indicators had been included in the Strategy and would be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

The Chair thanked the officer for a useful and easy to understand document.

Following questions from the Committee, the Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) highlighted the following:

- A comment was made on paragraph 1.3 of the report which appeared to say that decisions on the priorities to be included in the Strategy had been made before the public consultation exercise. The officer clarified that the CSP had received the Strategy after the completion of the strategic assessment. This had taken place in January 2019 when the priorities had been approved based on the assessment alone. Following this, the public were approached with regard to their views. The Strategic assessment only considered recorded data and the public's opinion was sought on issues that actually affect their lives. There was also an element of under-reporting of certain issues. The officer was requested to rewrite this section.
- The officer explained the design of the questionnaire and gave an example of the questions therein. The questionnaire did not contain much data as the honest opinion of residents was required and it was intended that this exercise be repeated on an annual basis. The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) was requested to advertise the questionnaire and to aim for a broader sample in future. It was also agreed that Members be sent the questionnaire.
- It was noted that a consultation could be skewed by a number of factors including gender, age and perception and any conclusions should be tempered with this knowledge.
- Members were advised that the priorities had been agreed as a partnership and resources could be sought from all partners. It was noted that anti-social behaviour took up most of the time of the Community Safety Team and referrals from all kinds of places were received daily. The Police had to prioritise certain incidents at certain times depending on the level of severity and risk. For example, domestic abuse was not a high priority according to questionnaire responses, but it still took up a lot of time police time.
- The advice of the Communications Team had been sought when undertaking the consultation. The Communications Team had taken over publicising the questionnaire and had advertised on the Council's social media pages, on the Council's website and in the staff newsletter. The key age groups of respondents had been as follows:

66% female

55-64 years – 27%
45-54 years – 26%
30-44 years – 14%

This spread had been much better than in previous years.

- Acting Chief Inspector Neil Loudon explained that Dartford and Gravesham were served by two police teams. The first was the local district team who responded to the highest impact scenarios and the most vulnerable in the community and generally only dealt with emergencies. The Community Safety Unit comprises three sergeants, three police constables and PCSOs and this team tackled lower level crime. Neither team was rich in resources.
- Following a question on “designing out” crime, the Committee was advised the physical works were routinely undertaken. An example was given with regard to the issues in Queen Street, Gravesend running down to the Riverside. A successful bid for funding had enabled the installation of two HD wireless high specification CCTV cameras (not covert) at either end of Queen Street which solved the problem of the gap in coverage. In addition, such actions as the closure of alley ways, the planting of prickly plants in planters to discourage loitering street drinkers had been undertaken and crime was designed out as much as possible. However the displacement of the activity also had to be taken into account.
- The second paragraph of paragraph 2.1 (iv) was highlighted and the Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) explained that there was a reluctance of victims to report certain types of crime because they sometimes experienced them so frequently that they could become normalised or some behaviour was not considered serious enough the report, for example racial verbal abuse on the daily commute to school, and therefore this was an issue the CSP wished to address. There had been a very good local campaign and a recent funding bid to the MHCLG had been successful and it was intended that the “No Space for Hate” campaign be increased and developed. This was not to be seen as an admission of failure but a need to know more detail and to continue to build victim’s confidence to report. Acting Chief Inspector Neil Loudon explained that hate crime was recognised as an issue that needed to be addressed and the police were briefed every morning on what had come in. However, he advised significant hate crime was very rare.
- The Committee was advised that hate crimes on social media were closely monitored. Victims of online hate crime who approached the police were offered support and, if appropriate, police action. However, despite this message being places on the social media pages of the police, victims were still reluctant to come forward.
- Members were advised of a meeting being arranged by Anita Tysie – Service Manager (Customer and Theatre Services) for the week after next to discuss community cohesion issues in the current climate.

The report was noted.

60. Kent & Medway Police and Crime Panel - Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2018

The Committee considered the Kent & Medway Police and Crime Panel minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2018.

Members noted the content of the minutes.

61. Exclusion

Resolved that pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded during the following item of business because it was likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted that, if member of the public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

62. Gang-related Activity, County Lines and the Local Picture

The Chair welcomed Acting Chief Inspector Neil Loudon and Detective Sergeant Ian Sanderson (Kent Police) to the meeting.

Detective Sergeant Ian Sanderson gave a presentation to the Committee on gang related activity, County lines and the local picture to enable a better understanding of the level and extent of gang related and criminal activity in Gravesham.

The Chair thanked Acting Chief Inspector Neil Loudon and Detective Sergeant Ian Sanderson for attending the meeting and the detailed information explained to Members.

63. Thanks from the Chair

On the conclusion of the meeting the Chair advised that this was the last meeting of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee that she would preside over and she thanked the Committee for keeping themselves informed, asking pertinent questions and for doing a great job.

The Chair also thanked the experts and specialists that had attended the meetings the backbone of which had been the police and she recognised the time they had given up and how busy they must be and stated it had been very much appreciated.

She also extended her thanks to the Assistant Director (Communities), the Strategy Manager (Community Safety Unit) and the Community Safety Operations Manager for their brilliant expertise.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.46 am