

Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 11 October 2018

7.30 pm

Present:

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

Cllrs: Gurdip Bungar
John Caller
Lee Croxton
Brian Francis
Rob Halpin
Gary Harding
Robin Theobald

Also in attendance: Cllr John Knight, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Environmental Services

Simon Hookway	Assistant Director (Communities)
Kath Donald	Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit)
Sean Steer	Operational Manager (Community Safety Unit)
Andy Gadd	Chief Inspector, Kent Police
Neil Loudon	Inspector, Kent Police
Rebecca Avery	Volunteer and Community Lead, Victim Support
Chris Wakeford	Committee Services Officer (Scrutiny) – Minutes

48. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Steve Thompson; Cllr Lee Croxton appeared as his substitute. An apology for absence was also received from Cllr Karen Hurdle.

49. Minutes

The Committee discussed minute 41. Vulnerability Investigation Team:

The officers advised that if Members wanted to help and support the issue of children not being criminalised for the explicit images sharing then they should pen a letter to the Home Office who have control and are able to change current legislation. Members asked that also included in the letter is the request that anonymity for the suspects in sexual abuse cases be the same for victims in that no names are released until proven guilty as people's lives have been destroyed following false sexual abuse allegation.

The Service Manager (Economic Development) advised that a letter about the aforementioned issues can be drafted and sent to the Home Office. It will need to be sent in the name of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety. A letter can be reported back to Committee Members.

The Committee agreed that the Lead Member should be invited to write the above-mentioned letter and copy it to Gravesham MP Adam Holloway.

The Assistant Director (Communities) explained that he would circulate the terms of reference for the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee to Members

Minute 42. Altogether Safer - Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls in North Kent. The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) explained that she had been successful in securing funding to extend the out of hours independent domestic abuse advisor service and also fund an additional Choose Respect worker.

A report on this matter will be brought back to Committee in March.

The Committee commended the Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) for all her hard work in successfully securing the funding.

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2018 were signed by the Chair.

50. Declarations of Interest

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

51. Victim Support Services - Presentation by Rebecca Avery, Volunteer & Community Lead for Victim Support Kent

The Committee received a presentation on Victim Support Services from Rebecca Avery, Volunteer & Community Lead for Victim Support Kent, please view the presentation here:

<http://democracy.gravesham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=355&MId=2959&Ver=4>

Rebecca Avery, Volunteer & Community Lead for Victim Support Kent fielded questions from the Committee and highlighted the following:

- Victim Support have a core team of full time professionals based in Ashford who are supported by volunteers. There is also a national team and the Victim Assessment Referral Team (VART)
- Victim Support will provide support to anyone who feels they are a victim.
- Volunteers include students from Canterbury University.
- Victim Support use interpreters and sign language professionals to ensure everyone has access to the service.
- Referrals for domestic abuse cases have increased, mainly due to the Triage Service and because people now report this type of crime more.

- The Witness Service used to come under Victim Support but now comes under the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The Committee thanked Rebecca Avery, Volunteer & Community Lead for Victim Support for an informative presentation.

52. CSU Victims Strategy Briefing

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) presented the Committee with a briefing paper on the Government's Victims' Strategy, published in September 2018.

The main thrust of the strategy is to improve victim services and ensure they are supported through the whole process.

The strategy will go out to consultation early 2019 with a new victims code expected early next year.

Following questions from the Committee, Chief Inspector Andy Gadd highlighted the following:

- There has been a big increase (nationally) in recorded modern slavery offences due to new reporting mechanisms, a better understanding of the offence and people feeling more comfortable in reporting the offence. However; modern slavery does not appear to be a huge problem in Gravesham.
- County Lines is the name given to the process by which criminal networks from urban centres expand their activities into smaller towns and rural areas. The movement of drugs, involving children as drug mules, is very much part of the national picture and sits on one of the six strands of the Kent Police Strategy.
- Any money earned as a result of, or in connection with, an offence can be recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. Kent police try to claim some of the confiscated money and assets back to reinvest into fighting crime wherever possible.
- Crime statistics have risen by 40 / 50% but this does not reflect the true picture. The way crime is recorded has changed so where you would previously have one crime report, this now branches out into about six and dramatically increases the recorded data.
- When used appropriately, Stop and Search is an effective tool.

The Committee commended Kent Police, the Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) and the Operational Manager (Community Safety Unit) for all their good work.

53. Safer Place Officers

The Operational Manager (Community Safety Unit) informed Members of work being carried out by the Safer Place Officer team introduced into the Community Safety Unit earlier this year, including:

- Spoken to and over 150 young persons about cycling in New Road and issued 44 FPNs for cycling in New Road;

- Two day of Littering Campaign in town centre; 15 FPNs issued for littering;
- Provided advice to dog owners in parks in regard to dog fouling;
- Assisted over a dozen homeless people by signposting them to relevant services;
- Provided intelligence reports to Kent Police in respect of individuals suspected of committing criminal offences;
- Moved on street drinkers whose alcohol consumption has repeatedly resulted in ASB and tried to encourage them to access local alcohol treatment services;
- Assisted a number of people who have been taken seriously ill in the town centre and intervened whilst emergency services were awaited;
- Trade waste agreements checked on commercial premises in town centre;
- Flytipping in town centre reported daily, checked for evidence, and passed to Waste Management for clearance.
- Supported legal action through statements and serving of notices on unauthorised tents on council land (4 separate Orders obtained).
- Working closely with partner agencies including; Kent Police, The Grand, Porchlight, Sanctuary, Change Grow Live (CGL) as well as internal departments in the local authority.

The Operational Manager (Community Safety Unit) also highlighted a recent positive local news article on the Safer Place Officers with the headline: 'Trios Town Centre Patrol Success'

The Committee praised the Safer Place Officers for their valuable work in the town and suggested that the scheme be widened to include other areas of the Borough.

The Committee noted the report and commended the good work of the Safer Place Officers.

The Chair explained that she would write to the Chief Executive on behalf of the Committee to commend the Safer Place Officers.

54. Kent & Medway Police and Crime Panel Minutes 19 July 2018

The Committee considered the Kent & Medway Police and Crime Panel Minutes 19 July 2018

The Assistant Director (Communities) explained that he had tried to invite the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner to the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee but it may be more effective to invite him to a larger meeting.

Members noted the contents of the minutes.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.32 pm