

Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 21 January 2021

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Baljit Hayre (Chair)

Cllr Christina Rolles (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
 Helen Ashenden
 Ejaz Aslam
 Harold Craske
 Dakota Dibben
 Aaron Elliott
 Brian Francis
 Gary Harding
 Emma Morley
 Lauren Sullivan
 Tony Rana
 Frank Wardle

Simon Hookway
Kath Donald
Sean Steer
James Beautridge
Chris Wakeford
Clive Boorman

Assistant Director (Communities)
Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit)
Operational Manager (Community Safety Unit)
Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police
Committee Services Manager (Minutes)
Technical Support Officer

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Leslie Pearton. Cllr Harold Craske attended as his substitute

An apology for absence was also received from Chief Inspector Junior Dann, Kent Police

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 8 October 2020 were signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Gravesham CSP and the de-merger of the Dartford and Gravesham CSP

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) informed the Committee of a proposal that was put forward by Gravesham Borough Council for the de-merger of the joint Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) last year and which was subsequently agreed, in pursuance of Gravesham's wish to establish a dedicated District-level CSP.

A delegated decision taken by the Cabinet Lead Member, Councillor Shane Mochrie-Cox, countersigned by the Leader of the Council, for the withdrawal of Gravesham from the joint CSP was taken and published in October in order that a new Partnership could be established without delay. Reports detailing the new arrangements have been previously provided to both the Council's Cabinet and the Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee.

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) highlighted the following:

- The first meeting of Gravesham CSP took place last week. The Terms of Reference were approved at that meeting.
- The structure of the CSP was also reviewed; the CSP already has some successful working groups (e.g. Vulnerability Panel, ASB Strategy Delivery Group etc.) but a few new ones have been created (e.g. Youth Engagement Panel, Modern Slavery Working Group)
- An Area Based Action Group is also being established to focus on hotspots; the first meeting will take place in early February and consider Environmental Crime in the Riverside area.
- The post for Community Safety Project Coordinator has been advertised and the successful candidate will coordinate the delivery of the Area Based Action Group's work.
- The Gravesham CSP will still work with Dartford and maintain the positive relationship that has been established.
- Next Steps: A Strategic Assessment (audit of crime & disorder) has been completed. One of the benefits of having our own CSP is that for the first time we can look at Ward data and more localised issues now. Patterns of change because of Covid-19 have been included in this year's Assessment. The document is restricted but if Councillors would like information about their Ward, please contact The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit).
- Public consultation on the Community Safety Strategy. The survey will be online but it will be shared with as many agency and community groups as possible.
- Following the consultation; a new Community Safety Strategy will be produced and presented to the Crime & Disorder Committee, CSP and the Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee in March

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) fielded questions from the Committee and highlighted the following:

- Paper copies of the survey will be available to people. The Council is considering contacting a local newspaper to advertise the survey and highlight that they can contact the Council by telephone and request a paper copy.

- The CSU will do their best to make sure everyone who wants to take part in the survey can but the unit would not be able to cope staff-wise to provide a telephone survey option. The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) explained that she would speak to the Service Manager, Town Centre & Cultural Services and see if there is scope to deliver that within the Customer Services Team
- Councillors are welcome to advise the Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) about anyone they know who would like to complete the survey but would find it challenging to complete online.
- The survey responses will be monitored to ensure there is a good representation from across the Borough (including the disabled community). The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) will speak to the Communications team regarding how to reach across the board.
- The CSU would be happy to conduct the survey annually as the strategy will be reviewed annually too.

Cllr Aaron Elliott suggested that the Community Safety Strategy should look at anti-social behaviour linked to dirt bikes, motorbikes and e-scooters.

The Committee commended the good work on this matter and noted the content of the report and the Terms of Reference of the new Gravesham CSP.

5. Kent Police Update

The Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge provided the Committee with a Kent Police update that included the following:

- Gravesend Town Centre Policing: 12 months, 2 officers – 123 arrests. A third officer has also joined the proactive and positive team.
- First drugs closure order – 3 month closure order – landlord has evicted the occupants from property.
- A 5 year criminal behaviour order has been issued
- 8 further applications are sitting with the court – shoplifting, street drinking, drug taking – delayed due to the pandemic, the Police are waiting for court dates.
- Tobacco – last year 150,000 cigarettes (fake or imported) were seized
- 604 pouches of illegal tobacco were seized (illegal tobacco) – closure orders are being explored.
- Organised crime group – child sexual exploitation
- High visibility patrolling is a priority.
- Community protection notices, challenging street drinkers
- Enforcing Covid-19 regulations
- Covid-19: additional strain on the Police – isolation, track and trace, close contact with the public.
- Operation Chestnut: provides 2 officers per day on the late shift (2pm and midnight) – ring fenced to deal with Covid-19 matters. Saturday and Sunday; 2 further officers

support the Police between 10am and 6pm. This allows the Police to maintain their usual police functions.

- Gravesham Police: 750 calls on Covid-19 breaches – attended all, some have been malicious
- Quarantine breaches – 75 calls
- April 2020 – North Kent Police: 189 Fixed Penalty Notices for breaches
- Crime types:
 - Burglaries: reduction due to lockdown, targeting known offenders, repeat victims, enhanced service, peephole door cameras, shed alarms, window alarms
 - Vehicle crime: due to lockdown there are more witnesses to crime: massive decrease.
 - Robbery: slight increase over 2% - many linked to gangs, illegal supply of drugs, county lines, drug debts, targeting offenders regularly. Street robberies 4 on remand. General robberies: low
- Joint operation with the British Transport Police, MET and Kent Police at the train station: knife arches, drugs dog – seized a machete knife off someone last week, seized drugs (multi agency approach)
- Drug traffic offences are down – took a lot off the streets last year
- Dismantling County Lines – criminals are scared to come to Gravesham.
- Drug Possession has gone up 40%: using stop and search fairly and effectively
- Weapons – massive increase in detection of knives – this is because the Police are detecting it more (not more people with knives) we take it off them then seek remand in custody for public safety.
- Violent crime: increases across the whole borough: a lot is to do with the way its recorded section 5 or 4 public order offence(e.g. if someone shouts abuse at a person its recorded as violent crime)
- Harassment / stalking: seen a rise – a lot of harassment cases have been online, ex partners etc.
- Stalking: domestic abuse victims disclose some control or coercive behaviours
- Violent crime: third highest in Kent – serious youth violent crime unit – get in early, prevent re-offending.
- Domestic abuse: rise seen nationally – people in lockdown every day – friction – a lot of reports from third parties (neighbours) – actively doing campaigns – putting out media messages.
- Next week: Vulnerability Investigation Team will attend all Domestic Abuse incidents – specially trained give people more confidence.
- E-scooters: can ride on private land, but not on roads or public places. There are some exemptions in London but in Gravesham you need a licence, insurance, helmet

The Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge fielded questions from the Committee and highlighted the following:

- Fixed Penalty Notices are £200, this drops down to £100 if paid early. In the event that a FPN is not paid; the Police officer is asked for further evidence to create a

case which is reviewed by the Criminal Justice Department and a summons is issued followed by a hearing.

- The Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge will look into whether E-scooters need an MOT.
- Nitrous-oxide canisters are a public health issue. Our main target is people who are supplying them which is part of the ASB / Patrol strategy.
- ASB involving 'dirt bikes' and motorcycles is a difficult issue to tackle. The CSU and local Policing team are the best to contact / report to. The Police are trying to find new ways of dealing with this issue, bikes have been seized and crushed but new ones appear. The issue will never be totally eradicated but it can be reduced.

Cllr Lauren Sullivan advised that, in her role as a KCC Cllr, she would be happy to work with Kent Police to help prevent Violent Youth Crime.

The Committee commended Kent Police for their good work in the Town Centre and thanked Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge for the update.

6. Topic Review Update

The Assistant Director (Communities) explained that the two topic reviews selected by the Committee in January 2020 - Knife and Violent Youth Crime and Town Centre Crime – were put on hold with a commitment to revisit their timings at the appropriate stage.

In the meantime, it should be noted that the Youth Engagement Panel, under the Community Safety Partnership, is picking up on actions to address youth crime and the agenda setting for this Committee at its last meeting and this, has included updates on Town Centre crime issues

The Committee noted the update on the two topic reviews.

7. Tackling Modern Slavery Progress Report

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) provided the Committee with details of progress being made in tackling modern slavery in the Borough, the Committee having received a presentation on this issue from Kent Police and having considered the Council's new Modern Slavery Strategy at its last meeting in October 2020.

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) highlighted the following:

- The Council successfully launched its Modern Slavery Strategy in October which coincided with National Anti-Slavery Day
- There were good articles in the Gravesend Messenger and Your Borough which demonstrated the close partnership approach being taken and included contributions from Porchlight, the Police and the Council

- The Gravesham Modern Slavery Working Group has been established and is chaired by Natalie Brown (lead on safeguarding) The Terms of reference for the group are detailed in Appendix 4 to the report.
- This is a very proactive local approach. To our knowledge, we are the only district in Kent that has a dedicated strategy with multi agency input.
- More victims are being identified and support is being provided

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) advised the Committee that she would be happy to discuss this matter further with Councillors outside of the meeting if they would like more information.

The Committee commended the progress being made in tackling modern slavery in the Borough and noted the update.

8. Most recent published Minutes of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel (8 September 2020)

The Committee considered the minutes for the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 8 September 2020.

The Committee noted the information contained within the minutes.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.03 pm