

Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Thursday, 3 June 2021

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox (Chair)
Cllr Tony Rana (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Helen Ashenden
Ejaz Aslam
Gurjit Kaur Bains
Harold Craske
Aaron Elliott
Brian Francis
Christina Rolles
Peter Scollard

Simon Hookway	Assistant Director (Communities)
Sean Steer	Community Safety Operations Manager
Tim Harris	Environmental Enforcement Manager
Ciara Ferguson	Committee Services Support Assistant

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Emma Morley. Cllr Brian Francis attended as her substitute.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 15 March 2021 were signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox declared an other interest in agenda Item 7. Corporate Performance Report: Q4 2020-21 as he is a Council appointee on Gravesham Community Leisure Limited (GCLL) and The Gr@nd CIC.

Cllr Peter Scollard declared an other interest in agenda Item 7. Corporate Performance Report: Q4 2020-21 as he is a Council appointee on Gravesham Community Leisure Limited (GCLL)

4. Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy Update

The Community Safety Operations Manager provided the Committee with the details of progress being made with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy since the last update report in September 2020.

The Community Safety Operations Manager reiterated that the focus remains on prevention, early identification, intervention, enforcement and communication. The following points were highlighted during the update:

- Prevention and Community Involvement: there has been an increase in the number of residents volunteering as Street Champions. Furthermore, there have been improvements with waste disposal bins and an effective promotion of the good disposal of household waste.
- Prevention and Intervention: the creation of a new post titled Specialist Housing Officer to operate in the Denton area. Housing have also signed up to training from the Chartered Institute of Housing and are receiving regular ASB training for all members of staff. There is also a new Council Tenant Handbook in progress and regular housing estate inspections.
- Supportive Intervention: continuing to identify safeguarding and vulnerability concerns. Recently, the Safeguarding Policy Lead Safeguarding Officer updated the Safeguarding Policy with training arranged for staff and to be rolled out to Members.
- Enforcement: the new Gravesham Community Safety Partnership is becoming established and will have a more focused approach on Gravesham's priorities. Moreover, a new Community Safety Project Coordinator was recruited in April to lead on area based anti-social behaviour. The Community Safety Unit web pages have also been updated.

Following questions from the Committee; the Community Safety Operations Manager highlighted the following:

- The Specialist Housing Officer will operate in the Denton area, they will mainly specialise in dealing with the Gypsy and Traveller community and they will investigate ASB reports within council estates. A summary of their role will be sent out to Members after the meeting.
- In regards to Woodlands Park, which experienced ASB issues which resulted in private security having to be hired during a lockdown, there has been an increased police presence to deter anti-social behaviour. Park Information Officers will be present in local parks and will be giving advice and guidance on the use of parks, such as issuing tickets for anybody seen littering. Moreover, CCTV is in operation at Woodlands Park, with one permanent camera and a mobile camera placed over the basketball area. Recently, the Police went to Woodlands Park with a big screen and offered advice on topics such as the use of E-Scooters.

Members noted the information contained in the report.

5. Environmental Enforcement Presentation

The Committee received a presentation from Tim Harris, the Environmental Enforcement Manager, on the Environmental Enforcement Team's achievements to date with examples of case studies.

The presentation can be viewed on the link below:

<https://democracy.gravesham.gov.uk/documents/s63025/Environmental%20Enforcement%20Presentation.pdf>

Following questions from the Committee; the Environment Enforcement Manager highlighted the following:

- In regards to suspected fly-tipping caught on CCTV, the example given being a vehicle driving down a road with visible items in the back and returning empty, the prosecution relies on the DVLA. If the vehicle is driving down a large road which has a multitude of entrance and exit junctions, the CCTV alone of the vehicle driving down the road would not be enough evidence for the DVLA to surrender the vehicle details, there would need to be a witness statement to accompany the CCTV.
- In an effort to reduce the amount of fly-tipping occurring at recycling centres, the Environmental Enforcement Team are partnering up with SOEX. Cameras will be installed at multiple recycling sites and signage has already been displayed stating that 'CCTV is in operation'. SOEX will be responsible for collecting evidence which they will forward to the Council.
- In relation to fly-tipping at charity shops, there needs to be better education for Gravesham residents as to what charity shops will and will not accept. However, in some cases it may be a clear example of fly-tipping and in these scenarios the Environmental Enforcement Team will always investigate.
- As illustrated in Case Study 1, multiple Members were concerned with Gravesham residents being conned by fake waste disposal companies who would go on to fly-tip their waste illegally. The Environment Enforcement Manager explained that the Council does not intend to prosecute members of the public who have made genuine mistakes. Kent County Council have also recently tried to educate and spread awareness to members of the public on their Duty of Care through a large programme which included posters on bus stops and on buses. Furthermore, there are regular leaflet drops and social media posts about the topic.
- When residents contact the Environmental Enforcement Team with their fly-tipping sighting through the website link or the contact centre, they can expect an email response at each stage of the investigation. If the fly-tipping site is found to be outside of the investigative realm of the team, for example: it is on private land, then the resident will receive an email to explain this. The turnaround for attending a fly-tipping report is the next working day and waste management intend to remove the waste within five days. When the waste is cleared, the resident will receive an automated email, ensuring a constant flow of information to the resident.
- When a case goes to Court and relies on a witness statement solely, the witness cannot remain anonymous. However, the Council can use the initial witness statement in the investigation process to gain access to information from the DVLA. As the investigation progresses, if there is then enough evidence against the suspected fly-tipper the witness may not be needed for the Court process.

Furthermore, the witness can at any stage withdraw their statement if they feel intimidated.

The Committee commended the Environmental Enforcement Manager and his team on the fantastic work in this area.

6. Corporate Performance Report: Quarter 4 2020/21

The Committee were provided with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as introduced within the Council's Corporate Plan, for Quarter Four 2020-21 (January to March 2021).

The Assistant Director (Communities) guided Members through the report and gave a brief overview of each Policy Commitment.

Following questions from the Committee; the Assistant Director (Communities) highlighted the following:

- With regards to PI 1 – Although the amount of reported crime offences has decreased overall, reported domestic abuse offences and Anti-Social Behaviour increased during the pandemic. Domestic abuse offences are reported as violence against the person and invariably entered into the stalking and harassment sub-category. ASB figures have been contributed to as a result of incidents of the breaking of Covid-19 restrictions being reported within this category.
- In regards to PI 42 – Members noted that The Woodville has temporarily opened as a Covid-19 vaccination centre and praised the work completed by the staff. Members expressed they are looking forward to The Woodville reopening as a theatre and hosting live events in the auditorium.

Members noted the information contained within the report.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm