

Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Wednesday, 1 June 2022

7.30 pm

Present:

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

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
 Helen Ashenden
 Leslie Hoskins
 Nirmal Khabra
 Emma Morley
 Leslie Pearton
 Christina Rolles
 Frank Wardle

Simon Hookway Assistant Director (Communities)
Tim Harris Environmental Enforcement Manager
Carlie Simmonds Committee Services Manager (Minutes)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Ejaz Aslam, Gurjit Bains, Harold Craske and Aaron Elliott. Cllrs Derek Ashenden, Leslie Hoskins, Leslie Pearton and Frank Wardle attended as their respective substitutes.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 14 March 2022 were signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox declared an interest in the items listed on the agenda as he is a Council appointee on Gravesham Community Leisure Limited (GCLL) and The Gr@nd CIC.

4. Environmental Enforcement Strategy

The Environmental Enforcement Manager informed the Committee that environmental enforcement was identified as one of the key areas that residents wanted to see the Council prioritising and as such, it was included within the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy. The Cabinet also made environmental enforcement a corporate priority within the Corporate Plan.

The Committee was therefore presented with the draft Environmental Enforcement Strategy which set out how and why the Council enforce environmental crime, the powers available and the type of enforcement actions that the Council can take. It reflected on the positive enforcement action that the Council had taken since the establishment of the Environmental

Enforcement Team in September 2020. A number of large-scale environmental crime investigations had been conducted.

The Committee was invited to comment on the draft strategy prior to it being finalised and signed-off by the Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure.

The Committee asked how the Council will tackle persistent offenders for example excess waste/littering from Houses in Multiple Occupation and dog fouling.

The Environmental Enforcement Manager advised that the Council was currently recruiting Street Scene Enforcement Officers who will be at the forefront targeting those areas where there is a persistent issue. The Officers will initially focus on education and prevention however will issue warnings, notices and fixed penalty notices when necessary.

The Committee also highlighted that when trying to report fly-tipping it can take a considerable amount of time due to the questions being asked and the postcode being unknown. It was suggested that a list of roads with postcodes be made available on the Council's website.

The Environmental Enforcement Manager advised that the Council was continuously looking at ways of improving the reporting method for fly-tipping for example a map had now been included on the website allowing people to pinpoint the location. The Committee was informed that even with a postcode it can still be difficult to establish the precise location of fly-tipping particularly in rural areas. There was also an App called 'what3words' which allows people to report/share the precise location; the Council was encouraging use of this App.

The Chair requested that reference be made to the 'what3words' App within the strategy.

The Committee thanked the Environmental Enforcement Manager and his team for the hard work that had been undertaken to date including the successful investigations/prosecutions.

The Chair advised that it was important for the Council to continue to lobby Government for stronger legislation in relation to environmental crime as the fines were minimal and no longer a deterrent.

The Committee noted the report and agreed that the strategy be signed-off by the Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure once all final comments had been incorporated.

5. Neighbourhood Policing Review

The Committee was informed that Kent Police was undertaking a Review of Neighbourhood Policing in response to the Government's Police Uplift Programme and a commitment to additional police officers for Kent by March 2023.

Gravesham's Community Safety Partnership considered the review at its meeting in April 2022 and the Partnership's response was attached at appendix 2 of the report for Members' information.

The intention was that a response would also be submitted by the Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure on behalf of the Council therefore the Committee was invited to comment on the review and highlight areas for inclusion in the response.

The Chair informed the Committee that this was a good opportunity for Members to share their views on what they feel policing should look like and what was needed to reinforce the importance of policing in the community.

The Committee highlighted the following for inclusion:-

- PCSOs – PCSOs were an important presence within local neighbourhoods however it was felt that they should be given enhanced powers to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour more effectively i.e. some PCSOs were unable to issue fines etc. PCSOs should continue to be replaced if they are promoted, resign etc. Losses should not result in natural wastage with the additional workload/neighbourhoods being placed on other PCSOs.
- Sufficient support staff – There needs to be sufficient support staff i.e. custody, contact centre etc. as Members had experienced long waiting and response times when contacting 101 and 999.
- Community Safety Unit – Awareness that Gravesham's Community Safety Unit have strong links with Kent Police.
- Focus – The Police also need to focus on low-level prevention as the public no longer trust that the Police will respond at that level. The Police have a duty to rebuild that trust. The public want value for money; they want to see a presence. Police presence acts as a deterrent/prevention.

6. Sport & Recreation Strategy

Further to minute 35 (14.03.2022), the Assistant Director (Communities) advised that the draft Sport, Leisure & Active Recreation Strategy had gone out to consultation. The public, sports clubs, community groups/organisations etc. had been asked to submit their views. The consultation had been running for three weeks, closing on Monday 6 June 2022.

The Committee was informed that 13 responses had been received to date and was provided with a summary of those responses. The key themes being accessibility, inclusivity, affordability and working closely with other clubs and organisations in the Borough.

The Committee also suggested that promotion be given to parent and child classes and/or those classes offering a crèche facility i.e. the Cyclopark was currently offering parent and baby fitness classes.

The Chair advised that the comments received would be incorporated within the strategy which will then be formally adopted under delegated powers.

7. Queen's Baton Relay

The Committee was informed that the Queen's Baton Relay (QBR) sets off on its journey throughout 72 Commonwealth nations and territories in October 2021 and returns to the UK prior to the Opening Ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham/West Midlands on 28 July 2022.

The Queen's Baton Relay will visit all regions of the UK over a 25-day period, with the South East Region having 2 days on 6 and 7 July 2022 and Kent receiving the Baton on 7th.

Gravesham made its case for the Baton to visit the most ethnically diverse Borough of the County with strong and historic links to the Commonwealth. Therefore, the Borough had now been added to the Baton's route with its departure from Gravesend on the morning of Friday 8 July prior to a hand-over to the Eastern Region at Tilbury.

The report provided Members with details on the proposed Baton route in Gravesend and the communication opportunities. Officers were currently working with the Gurdwara, Kent Equality Cohesion Council, Port of London Authority, local schools and sports clubs to put in place arrangements for the event. Invitations will also be sent to local organisations, community groups, schools etc.

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that, following the devastating fire of the old New Inn at Milton Road/Queen Street, officers were currently exploring an alternative route in case the road remains closed on 8 July 2022.

Participating towns were announced nationally by the QBR National Steering Group on 11 May. An article had therefore been prepared for Your Borough and was at appendix 2 to the report for Members' information.

The Committee congratulated officers in securing Gravesham's participation in the Queen's Baton Relay (QBR) and stated that it was important for this to be publicised via all media channels where practicable.

8. Corporate Performance Report: Q4 2021-22

The Committee was presented with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as introduced within the Council's Corporate Plan, for Quarter Four 2021-22 (January to March 2022).

The Committee highlighted the following:-

- PI 1 and 2 – Community Safety, the Committee noted that the figures were levelling out. Work was underway on a new internal database which will interlink with multiple departments within the Council i.e. Environmental Health, Housing etc. so that relevant information can be shared.
- PI 13 – Environment Enforcement, the figures showed the level of activity being undertaken. A number of cases had now gone to court, the outcomes being mixed (successful and unsuccessful). The figures were starting to show a downwards trend, it was felt that this could be a reflection of the hard work being undertaken in that less enforcement crime was now taking place due to the Council's actions.
- PI 37 and 38, Affordable Leisure Offer, the recovery of the leisure centres was not back to pre-pandemic however this could be due to affordability and people finding alternative ways to exercise. The team at Gravesham Community Leisure Limited was working hard to promote/increase memberships etc.

It was felt that the swimming pools could be maximised more as there were some sessions that were non-bookable however the swimming pools were not being used.

The Chair advised that those sessions might have been booked for school use, cleaning etc. however he would raise this with Gravesham Community Leisure Limited.

- PI 41, Cohesive and resilient community, the Council had been working with a number of community groups/organisations to start hosting a number of small events.

The Council recently hosted a 'Street Champions Meet and Greet' event which was well attended. The Committee commended the work of the Street Champions as they were the definition of a resilient community.

9. Mr Rob Swain, Managing Director, Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd

The Chair stated that Mr Rob Swain, Managing Director of Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd, will be retiring at the end of June 2022. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Mr Swain for his many years of service to the development and operation of leisure facilities in the Borough during his tenure at Gravesham Borough Council and Gravesham Community Leisure Ltd and he wished him a long and happy retirement. This record of thanks received unanimous support from the Committee.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.41 pm.