

## **Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee**

**Thursday, 26 October 2023**

**7.30pm**

### **Present:**

Cllr Baljit Hayre (Chair)  
Cllr Lyn Milner (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:           Derek Ashenden  
                              Helen Ashenden  
                              Ejaz Aslam  
                              Deborah Croxton  
                              Gary Harding  
                              Jo Hart  
                              Alan Metcalf  
                              Karina O'Malley  
                              Leslie Pearton  
                              Tony Rana  
                              Christina Rolles  
                              Ektaveen Thandi  
                              Frank Wardle

**Note:**                   Councillor Mochrie-Cox and Councillor Williams were also in attendance

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Kath Donald   | Strategic Manager                          |
| Dorota Trapl  | Community Safety Administrator             |
| Sophie Jordan | G-Safe Business Crime Reduction Initiative |
| Chloe Taylor  | Committee Services Officer (Minutes)       |

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Aaron Elliot. Cllr Alan Metcalf attended as substitute.

### **2. Minutes**

The minutes of the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 14 March 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Pearton declared an interest as his daughter was a prison officer at Warren Wood.

### **4. Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference**

Before the item commenced the Chair thanked Simon Hookway (Assistant Director) following his departure from the council after 37 years of service. Many members of the committee worked closely with him during that time and really valued the support and assistance that he provided to them.

Members of the committee joined the Chair in recording their thanks and wishing Simon the very best of luck for the future.

The Strategic Manager introduced this item and stated it was for the new members of the committee to help inform them about its terms of reference. The committee were reminded of their important function in scrutinising the work of the partnership and that it was a statutory requirement for local authorities to have this committee.

The committee noted the report.

## **5. Tackling Nuisance Bikes and Vehicles**

Due to police unavailability, this report was not discussed.

## **6. Safer Streets Project**

The Strategic Manager, Community Safety Administrator, and G-Safe Business Crime Reduction Initiative delivered a presentation to members (included in the agenda pack), and highlighted the following key points:

- A successful application was submitted for just over £61k, matched to a total of £122k by Gravesham Community Safety Unit (CSU) in collaboration with other partnerships.
- The project area covered approximately half of each of the previous Ward areas of Pelham and Riverside.
- The CSU focused on strengthening formal surveillance where the police had proposed it would be worth having additional CCTV. New cameras had been introduced as a part of this work.
- The CSU had also focused on streetlights as part of strengthening surveillance. They had secured external funding to upgrade the current heritage street lighting. This part of the project had been delayed slightly due to a component in the streetlights which prevented the upgrade. The contractors had to create a new part which allowed for the upgrade to proceed. However, it was predicted that it would be completed by January 2024.
- The CSU worked on improving natural surveillance, such as clearing the overgrown vegetation, fly-tipping and improving poor lighting on the pedestrian footpath between Thames Way and the Overcliffe.
- The G-Safe Free Radio Trial and Upgraded Radio Link was introduced.
- The Gravesham Safe Space Scheme had created locations within the town centre where anyone feeling vulnerable could access help.
- Bystander Effect training was delivered by Cultivating Minds.
- Targeted work was delivered to raise awareness of Violence Against Women & Girls (BAME communities) through working with key partners.
- Two evening and nighttime economy town centre audits had been performed – one at the beginning of the Project and the second on 29 September this year. The Strategic Manager emphasised that when they spoke to residents when it was still light and there was more footfall, residents said they felt safe due to it still being visibly light and busy. However, once it got to 11pm there was very little footfall, and it was dark in a lot of areas. Residents expressed that they felt unsafe due to it being

dark and isolated. Corporate work was being undertaken to boost the evening and nighttime economy.

- The CSU had achieved a full spend, with no overspend.

Following questions and comments from members, the Strategic Manager, Community Safety Administrator, and G-Safe Business Crime Reduction Initiative explained that:

- The Strategic Manager would double check with the Parking & Environmental Enforcement Services Manager regarding the strength of the streetlights.
- G-Safe was a Business Crime Reduction Partnership. They were self-funded from membership subscriptions. It was a very affordable service, but they're not an emergency service nor a response team, but instead a community initiative that works with businesses to provide a radio and intranet system that was accessible online. It was a well-established and well regarded.
- The police have a direct crime reporting link via Disc and G-Safe always encourage businesses to make a police report where necessary.
- G-Safe had one paid employee who deals with the radios, invoicing, the signing of new businesses, the Disc system and the publication of incidents.
- There was a board of management, who were elected from the memberships at the annual meeting. Prior to this, members will nominate who they want to sit on the board.
- The board had refused a membership before, but the grounds for granting memberships were important as there was personal and sensitive data being transmitted over the radio.
- In terms of access, not all Safe Space businesses will have access for wheelchairs. The Strategic Manager advised they could look at all the Safe Spaces and identify the ones with disabled access and encourage those that don't to address this if possible. Where the Safe Spaces were listed on the Gravesham Borough Website, it was suggested that a disability symbol be placed next to the businesses that had disabled access and disabled toilets.
- The CSU had made it clear with businesses that staff should not be getting involved in confrontational/dangerous situations and in any instance where they were concerned for their safety or of that of others or the individual approaching them, the emergency services should be called.
- The type of support offered by Safe Spaces was low level support, such as an individual coming into the shop concerned that they're being followed, and they ask to wait in the shop for their taxi to arrive or ask the shop to call them a taxi. These Safe Spaces were not there to be a police service.
- The safety of shop staff was a primary concern. An occasion arose where staff were not comfortable with providing a Safe Space, and as a result the business withdrew from the service. The CSU were understanding and did not pressure them to participate.
- G-Safe was able to be extended outside of the town centre. However, it would require the cooperation of all businesses in the area for the radios to be beneficial.
- The CSU gave pins to those who had completed the Bystander Effect training, but the look of the pins was not promoted by those who were trained. This was something that they could look into in order for members of the public to recognise who was trained.

- If users of Safe Spaces had concerns about how their situation was dealt with, the GBC website had a disclaimer where individuals were encouraged to contact CSU had the situation gone wrong.
- Depending on the nature of the incident, reporting to the police was discretionary where appropriate. Those accessing the service should be notified of the options and services available to them, but it was important to consider the welfare of the individual. However, where there was a threat to life, the police should always be called, and in incidents where the individual was under 16, calling the police was a requirement.
- There were a lot of residential areas that had a Neighbourhood Watch. The Strategic Manager advised that it would be worth looking into which ones were active.
- Purchasing additional radios for the G-Safe free trail would require additional funding. If there was external funding available, they could look to increase the number of radios available, but this would be subject to other competing areas of work.
- The Bystander Effect training includes advises on how to stay safe when attending confrontational situations or how to safely take stand against unwanted behaviour. It was about de-escalating a situation, and they were not advised to enter any situation in which they didn't feel safe, and they were not encouraged to get involved with serious crimes. This training did not offer a direct approach, they were trained in effective, creative, discrete and non-confrontational approaches.
- By-stander Effect Training and Gravesham Safe Space are two initiatives that are and will be carried on by CSU throughout Gravesham.
- The Safe Spaces and Bystander Effect training were fully endorsed by the police.
- Under-reporting was one of the biggest issues within business crime. Individuals were not reporting incidents to the police. G-Safe encouraged businesses to report these crimes and have prepared reports on behalf of the business to hand over to the police.
- G-Safe was promoted in GBCs Your Borough, to both the public and businesses. Word of mouth was largely how it was promoted, G-Safe had walked through the town speaking to businesses, calling businesses and the use of social media.

The Committee noted the report.

## **7. Policing Update**

Due to police unavailability, this report was not discussed.

## **8. Suggestions for future Topic Reviews**

The Chair of the committee encouraged members to put forward suggestions for future scrutiny topic reviews. The following were suggested:

- 1) E-Scooters and Dirt Bikes
- 2) Anti-social behaviour, particularly related to groups of school age individuals in the time frame after school. This links to education at school and encouraging children to be a part of the community/and be more socially conscious.
- 3) Rural crime.

The Chair thanked Members for their suggestions and advised they would take them away to discuss with the Strategic Manager, and bring this back to the next committee meeting.

#### **9. Latest published Minutes of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel**

Members of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee were presented with the minutes for the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel. This was for information only. Cllr Mochrie-Cox, the GBC representative on the panel welcomed questions from members and advised if they had any queries to contact him.

The committee noted the report.

#### **Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 9.08 pm