

Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 13 October 2016

7:30pm

Present:

Cllr John Knight (Chair)
Cllr Sara Langdale (Vice-Chair)

Cllrs: Gurdip Ram Bungar
Rob Halpin
Les Howes
Karen Hurdle
David Hurley
Lyn Milner
Lauren Sullivan

Please note: Cllr Steve Thompson was also in attendance.

Simon Hookway	Service Manager (Economic Development)
Kath Donald	Strategic Manager (Community Safety)
Sean Steer	Operational Manager (CSU)
Inspector Chris Carter	Kent Police
Ben Clarke	Committee & Scrutiny Assistant

1. Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from Cllr Samir Jassal, Chief Inspector Tracey Quiller (Kent Police) and Melanie Norris.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2016 were signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr John Knight declared an "Other Interest" as he is a volunteer for the victim support service.

5. Responding to Hate Crime

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety) presented a report to the Committee that informed Members of work that is taking place locally to raise awareness and encourage the reporting of hate crime as part of a wider programme contributing to community cohesion. It also ensured that Members were fully apprised of Central Government's new Action Plan for tackling hate crime as a national priority and how the Council is operating proactively to fulfil its community safety responsibilities by supporting GBC's diverse population.

At the last Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee held in February 2016, Members considered the proposed priorities that had been identified by the Dartford and

Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for inclusion in its new three-year Community Safety Strategy. The Committee agreed that hate crime should be included in the Strategy; officers reported the Committee's recommendation to the CSP and tackling hate crime was subsequently incorporated into the Strategy within its key objective, 'Protecting and Strengthening Communities'.

The Strategic Member (Community Safety) highlighted the following key points to the Committee:

- Page nine of the report sets out the National position on Hate Crime and the range of actions to be delivered between now and 2020
- One of the biggest issues is that Hate Crime is severely underreported with only about 25% of these crimes being reported in the whole country
- Page 11 showcases the different forms of Hate Crime which include much more than just racial discrimination:
 - Disability
 - Race or ethnicity
 - Religion or belief
 - Sexual orientation
 - Transgender identity
 - Hate crime is also on the increase where offenders specifically target vulnerable elderly people or people with disabilities to 'befriend' them in order to win their trust and confidence only to exploit them or their property
- The government has recently released new guidance on strengthening the sentencing of an individual carrying out a hate crime to make people understand the seriousness of what they are doing and what potential criminal charges they should expect to receive
- Since the previous Committee, proposed work and strategies have been taken to the Community Cohesion Group that consists of representatives from Kent Police, Kent Equality Cohesion Council and other community groups
- External funding was received from the Home Office which allowed GBC to give three days of Home Office accredited training to approximately 45 staff from different departments and other local agencies on Ideologies (Violent and Non-Violent Extremism) and Far Right Extremism that was incredibly well-received; due to this an extra two days of training later this month (October 2016) has been funded from money given by the Police & Crime Commissioner's allocation 2016-17
- There are very clear policies in place for staff members if they felt they had been targeted by a hate crime but less for the Public; they are only advised in the first instance to contact the Police but many simply will not due to reasons including lack of confidence or nervousness with authority

- The intention is to improve the signposting of victims visiting the Civic Centre to other services. For instance, members of the public that come forward to report being a victim of a hate crime and have mental health issues could instead be directed towards the Gateway as they have specialist services to help them instead of having the only option to go to the Police
- Leaflets have been produced that aim to raise awareness of hate crime which have been distributed in the foyer and around the Civic Centre and advise people that from the 8th to 15th October 2016 it is actually National *Hate Crime* Awareness Week; due to the language barrier some of the advertising will be written in different languages to account for the various communities
- There are also third party reporting systems which are being promoted by GBC such as Crimestoppers whereby crimes can be reported anonymously by any individual
- The Kent Police Community Liaison Officer has already been into Gravesend Library this week to deliver a session on hate crime to improve awareness of it to the public and he will be holding another session at the Gateway tomorrow (Friday 14 October 2016)
- Online training is being investigated as a possible alternative for those that cannot make it to the day sessions. The CSU is also currently sourcing a brief on-line training session (similar to Prevent On-line Training completed by staff and Members last year) that all staff and Members will be asked to complete to raise awareness of the different types of hate crime and how victims can be supported
- Work is also being undertaken in line with the Communications department to put information online through the Councils website and social media accounts with links to a range of agencies that will be able to provide appropriate advice and assistance in order to reach different groups of people who may not be able to receive any paper leaflets etc
- The Home Office made funding available to Community groups to create and run projects on 'Hate Crime'; as Local Authorities cannot claim it, all of the details have been given to local community groups so that they can make full use of it
- The Housing Department are worked with closely as they are more likely to encounter potential victims and offenders when they are carrying out so many housing visits around the Borough
- Opportunities are being explored for joint working with organisations and agencies already engaging with young people e.g. KCC Youth Services, The Gr@nd Project, Gravesham's Youth Council, to encourage discussion and debate about hate crime, its impact, how to seek advice or report incidents and encourage young people themselves to offer suggestions for activities that they feel would be beneficial and which they may be able to participate in delivering

Following questions from Members the Strategic Manager (Community Safety), the Operational Manager (CSU) and Inspector Chris Carter, Kent Police advised that:

- The leaflets logos 'Love Gravesend' are from a wider campaign run by the Communications Department but the point can be raised with them about changing Gravesend to Gravesham to better include the whole Borough
- Post Brexit there has been a significant rise in reports of 'hate crime' nationally but this is not reflected in the Borough and there is also no conclusive evidence that the increase has only come from Brexit; the refugee situation in Europe could also of been a factor
- Both physical and verbal reports of hate crime would be classified under the violent crimes category
- Social media and training for school children is largely covered by an ex-PCSO who is managed centrally; she delivers e-safety training for schools all around the Borough to raise awareness
- The Kent Police Family Coordinator Liaison Officer works closely with schools and the CSU to help identify problems with children early on and provide support for victims; liaise with families to try and rectify the situation before any serious damage is caused
- Choices (Providing Specialist Domestic Abuse Services) have a LGBT officer that provides support to the Gravesham LGBT community with any problems or prejudices they face
- Word of mouth helps services gain attention; once a few individuals have been helped then it spreads through the community with much more ease and trust is slowly built up in the service that is provided
- A meeting has been set up with Jo Hook from Kent County Council's Early HelpTeam next week; the topic of external speakers at school can be discussed with her

The Chair gave permission to Cllr Steve Thompson who thanked the Committee and officers for taking this subject so seriously and agreeing it should be a priority; he also asked a number of questions on the subject at hand to which the officers explained that:

- With regard to the Equality Impact Assessment on Appendix 1 of the report it only says N/A as the report does not have a decision for the Committee to make
- At the moment it would be of no use to the Council if hate crime figures were released as it is more management than performance data, however a daily report is received and an officer is tasked with investigating each individual reporting of a hate crime

- A weekly report is also received which shows the amount of hate crimes reported in the previous thirty days – there are no additional details given, each case must be investigated and the remaining details are attained by officers which is why the reports on their own would be of no use to GBC
- KCC's Community Safety Team (who provide crime and ASB data to CSUs) can be contacted regarding the figures of hate crime to try to ascertain what future figures that will be provided will consist of
- The Independent Police Advisory Group is formed of Community leaders who meet at County level to discuss important issues surrounding hate crime; transgender is a hot issue
- Third party reporting availability is essential so that crimes can be reported by those who would not do otherwise due to lack of anonymity or not wanting to talk to Police; Crimestoppers is always willing to take any reports and the Council itself is thinking of creating a small team from staff members and training them to be able to take down any reports that are brought to the Civic Centre
- More emphasis should have been put on the fact that it is Hate Crime week and it was unfortunate that no press release was sent out by the Communications department which can be brought up with them after the meeting

A Member put the idea forward that actually, it is the older generation that requires further training on prevention of hate crime and awareness rather than the younger generation and inquired as to how they could be targeted.

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety) advised that there is a limit to how much GBC can reach the older generation; all available advertisements and strategies are currently being used to reach out to all age groups but the reality is that it has to be seen that Hate Crime is totally unacceptable in Gravesham. Continued press releases will also be written to remind people about hate crime and Members can help by talking to their own constituents and getting the message across.

Members noted the information contained within the report.

6. Legislative Update

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety) presented the Committee with a report that provided a brief overview and details of new or planned legislation that may be of interest to the Committee's Members in view of areas of community safety activity that have been considered by the Committee at previous meetings or in respect of which details have been specifically requested by Committee Members.

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety) advised Members the report outlined the increased sentencing for drivers caught texting and a summary of key points of psychoactive substance misuse.

Following Members questions the Strategic Manager (Community Safety) and Inspector Chris Carter, Kent Police clarified that:

- As of yet there is not a strategy for a crackdown on catching texting drivers but one may be being formulated in line with next year's new legislation
- In 2015, 43 tickets were issued; 46 tickets have been issued this year by officers in the Gravesham area with a further 6 being caught by cameras, presumably static cameras
- When the government announces new regulations there will be a THINK! Campaign to deter people from texting and driving; materials will be released closer to the time and signs will be put on roads around Gravesend
- The License to Kill event is supported by GBC which talks about the dangers of driving to the last year of sixth forms in schools around Gravesham
- Trading Standards are aware of the shops in Gravesend that are selling illegal tobacco and are working closely with the Kent Police Drug Liaison Officer
- Kent Police have had no additional reporting of crack cocaine use in Lord Street car park however Members are encouraged to report anything they hear to the Police
- Kent Police are fully aware of the illegal activities around the Clocktower and they are being monitored

Members noted the information contained in the report

7. Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel Update

Members were shown the minutes of a meeting of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 14 June 2016.

Members noted the information contained in the report, that the council is represented on the Panel and that the minutes of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel meeting would be brought to future meetings of the Committee.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8:55pm.