

**Classification:** Public

**Key Decision:** No

## **Gravesham Borough Council**

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 9 November 2020

**Reporting officer:** Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit)

**Subject:** De-merger of the Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership

### **Purpose and summary of the report:**

This report is provided to ensure that Cabinet members are fully informed of a proposal put forward by Gravesham Borough Council for the de-merger of the joint Dartford and Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and which has subsequently been agreed, in pursuance of Gravesham's wish to establish a dedicated District-level CSP.

### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is asked to:

- i) Note the content of the report with particular reference to ;
  - (a) the steps that have been taken during this process to ensure that there was appropriate consultation with all statutory partners on the proposal for a de-merger and their responses;
  - (b) that an application was submitted to the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) seeking his formal approval of the de-merger to which a positive response was received;
  - (c) the 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 in order that a dedicated District-level Partnership can be established without delay;
  - (d) a draft timetable of the key milestones leading to the formal launch of both a new Gravesham CSP and a new Community Safety Strategy.

## **1. Introduction and Rationale**

- 1.1 This report appraises Cabinet of the de-merger of the existing joint CSP that has been initiated by Gravesham Borough Council. Following the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, both Dartford and Gravesham established Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) now known as Community Safety Partnerships, in order to meet their statutory obligations. The separate Partnerships were then merged in December 2006 following a Home Office-led review. The merger of Partnerships, particularly in two-tier Authorities, was seen at that time as a positive means of pooling resources and reducing the level of demand made on those agencies needing to participate in Partnership meetings.
- 1.2 During the lifetime of the CSP since the merger, the joint arrangements have generally worked well and strong relationships have been formed across the agencies represented. However, many things have changed during the course of the last 14 years that led Gravesham to

conclude that now is the right time to re-establish its own separate and independent statutory CSP.

- 1.3 In respect of the Partnership directly, there had been significant changes to its structure and a shift from joint cross-Borough sub-groups of the CSP to separate working groups to address a variety of very local community safety priorities. This had resulted in the CSP being the **only** joint meeting that remained. Meetings were rarely able to consider local issues or operational activity in real detail, tending primarily to discuss matters only at a very strategic level. In part, this has been a reflection of the different approaches being taken at a local level, the different needs of our local communities and the fact that certain community safety issues e.g. dealing with Serious Organised Crime, require a very specific focus and agency representatives with local, grassroots knowledge.
- 1.4 It is also the case that whilst Dartford and Gravesham may share some headline community safety objectives, the degree to which we each need to prioritise tackling certain issues differs as our experience of them is not the same. We have a responsibility to ensure that we can, through multi-agency working, be as effective as possible in tackling the crime and disorder concerns that are most prevalent in our area and most important to our local people. Gravesham feels that this is something that will be better achieved through a dedicated CSP that will be able to focus specifically on and be proactive in dealing with local matters.
- 1.5 In the past, there may perhaps have been financial advantages in having a joint Partnership but no such advantages exist now. Each Borough has their own Community Safety Unit (CSU) and each Unit receives separate corporate funding through their respective Councils to deliver a community safety service. Each Unit also makes individual applications/bids to the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner's Office on an annual basis to secure funding to deliver core activity and each are separately accountable to the PCC for expenditure of any funds allocated. Other funding has been successfully sought through bids to Central Government, usually through consortium bids on behalf of several different agencies and charities and there is no reason why this cannot continue in the future.
- 1.6 The rationale for the proposal has been one of wanting to ensure that Gravesham has a strong Partnership in place with the ability to concentrate on local residents' needs and that will enable initiatives to meet these as effectively as possible. The close working relationship that exists between the two Borough Councils, particularly between our CSUs is highly valued and Gravesham has sought to reassure partners that this will not be undermined by having separate Community Safety Partnerships – we will still be working together as we have done between CSP meetings. This proposal has been purely about allowing future Partnership meetings to have a direct focus. Further, having our own CSP will provide our statutory partners with the opportunity to discuss those issues that affect their own service areas in much greater detail than we have been able to do. It will hopefully also make participation in the Partnership of greater and real value to them. It is perhaps important to note that all other Districts in Kent have their own CSP; Gravesham is simply following the same approach and supporting consistency across the county.

## **2. Practicalities**

- 2.1 In putting forward the proposal, a number of practicalities were considered. The following information was shared with statutory partners as part of the consultation with them and to assist them with any discussions that would have been deemed necessary internally within their organisations.
  - 2.1.1 Does the joint Partnership provide advantages at an operational level that would be weakened if separate CSPs were in place?  
No. Each Borough's activity at an operational level is almost exclusively directed by each area's CSU and determined by local priorities. Even where the priorities themselves are the same, the responses to address them are identified and delivered separately as the approach taken

differs dependent on the location, the physical environment and the population. Neither of our CSUs have any staff with a cross-Borough remit – our Teams operate completely independently of each other.

2.1.2 Would having separate CSPs reduce our ability to address cross-border criminality?

No. Information-sharing agreements are in place with Dartford as they are with all other Districts, with Kent County Council and with Medway Council. Intelligence in respect of cross-border criminality is routinely shared with other areas and this practice would remain the same. In reality, Gravesham experiences a greater degree of cross-border criminality from the Medway towns than from Dartford whilst the latter experiences a greater problem with offenders from the Bexley area than from Gravesham. Very positive relationships exist between all CSU Managers and there is no reason to believe that the relationship we have with Dartford in respect of information-sharing would not continue.

2.1.3 Would having separate CSPs reduce our opportunity to work together or share good practice?

No. Both CSUs have strong track records of working collaboratively with other Districts and non-Local Authority partner agencies. Gravesham CSU has also been successful in bidding for significant sums of external funding to the Home Office and to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government – none of those opportunities *required* that applications should cover more than one Local Authority area but we have submitted consortium or cross-Borough bids where this has been advantageous to the application or to the project for which the funding is being sought. Working collaboratively not just with Dartford but also with other areas and partner agencies will be key in attracting further external funding in future but our working together on bidding for these resources is not dependent on our having a joint CSP.

2.1.4 Would having separate CSPs increase our administrative and performance reporting burden?

Administration of the CSP is currently shared between Gravesham and Dartford's CSUs. Gravesham has a full-time CSU Administrator who will continue to fulfil the administrative requirements of a Gravesham CSP.

In terms of performance reports that are provided quarterly to the CSP, currently the responsibility is shared by the CSU Strategic Manager (Gravesham) and the Community Safety Manager (DBC). Gravesham's CSU Manager will have the responsibility of fulfilling the requirement of completing the performance reports for a dedicated Gravesham CSP as required (on a quarterly basis or otherwise). In reality, the task should be much simpler and less time consuming as currently each report has to take account of changing patterns of crime and ASB across areas and activity being carried out in each Borough - if the report writer is only having to consider local performance and activity (with which they will be much more familiar and knowledgeable, the time spent on the preparation of these documents will be reduced).

It will also mean that the report can consider local community safety matters and activity in greater detail which will raise the level of the debate and our understanding of issues and ultimately, enable us to better target our resources and efforts.

2.1.5 How will the completion of the Strategic Assessment (a legal obligation) and the production of a Community Safety Strategy/Plan be affected if we were to have separate CSPs?

Gravesham's view is that the impact would be positive rather than negative. Under current arrangements the two Boroughs take it in turns (alternating year-to-year) to produce the Strategic Assessment in the format of one document covering both areas.

The Strategic Assessment process is already time-consuming and quite demanding as it pools data and intelligence from all our partner agencies to assess changes in levels of crime and ASB as the first steps in determining our local priorities. Our job is made twice as difficult as we have to include and analyse all data/information in respect of Dartford *and* Gravesham. Consequently, the Assessment can become lengthy and lose local focus - which defeats its purpose as a key analytical tool. A totally local product would enable us to spend more time

drilling down on the causal factors behind increases in or the prevalence of certain crime types. It would also mean that the CSP meeting that considers the findings of the Assessment would be able to consider different issues in more depth and be able to better accommodate the engagement of different partner agency representatives in that discussion.

The Community Safety Strategy/Plan – this is currently a joint delivery plan. In establishing a dedicated District-level CSP, Gravesham will then develop a new, locally-focussed Strategy and supporting Action Plan. This will more clearly reflect local priorities and will make reporting back on progress in delivering certain initiatives at quarterly CSP meetings more meaningful.

2.1.6 Would having separate CSPs place a greater burden on statutory partners in terms of attending meetings?

Any additional burden would be minimal as the meetings only take place quarterly – and in the past the joint CSP had a CSP Support Group as well as the main group and agency representatives covering both areas were attending both of those without difficulty. It also should be noted that **all other Districts have their own CSPs** and partner representatives covering more than one area are having to accommodate those; **we would not be requesting any more support than is routinely provided elsewhere.**

Given the increased use of on-line meetings during Covid-19, it is also possible that quarterly meetings would have options to ‘dial-in’ rather than attend in person to lessen the demand on time that physical attendance might place on attendees.

Ultimately, by making the meetings more focussed and relevant to every agency represented at the table, the benefits should counter any additional requirement placed on the time of the few agency representatives affected by having to attend separate CSP meetings in Dartford and Gravesham.

Both Districts have always had separate Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees despite having a joint Partnership, therefore, the establishing of a separate Gravesham CSP will not have any impact on partners who regularly attend Scrutiny meetings.

2.1.7 Would having separate CSPs have a negative financial impact?

No. Each Borough has a separate Community Safety Fund allocation made available through the PCC’s Office and this would not change. Business cases (bids) for how we would like to spend this funding are made by our CSUs independently of each other and historically, how this funding has been expended has been very different – reflecting our different community safety priorities and approaches.

Having separate CSPs would not prevent us from continuing to agree to jointly fund specific initiatives that would benefit both our areas e.g. sharing the cost of delivering training sessions for staff and partner agencies.

Externally funded projects developed by Gravesham CSU (via the Home Office or MHCLG and for which Gravesham has been the responsible/lead Authority) to deliver initiatives benefitting both our areas, have now been completed; we have no other shared financial resources.

2.1.8 Are there joint CSP Sub-Groups/Working Groups that would be affected if there were separate CSPs?

No. There are no Sub-Groups of the CSP that cover both our areas (there were in the past but as local priorities have changed some groups have been wound down and new groups have been established but these operate at District level very successfully) e.g. Serious Organised Crime Groups, Vulnerability Panels.

North Kent Domestic Abuse Forum is not a sub-group of the CSP and existed prior to the formation of the joint CSP. Representatives from both our CSUs already both attend the Forum’s meetings and would continue to do so in the event of the merged CSP arrangements

coming to an end. The Forum does not report directly to the CSP and therefore, there would be no impact on reporting procedures.

### **3. Consultation and Responses Received**

- 3.1 All statutory partner representatives were contacted and briefed on the proposed de-merger in late August/early September. A letter was then sent to each of the following from the Chief Executive and the Leader on 17 September 2020 setting out the proposal, requesting a response confirming whether they were supportive of the move:

**Kent Police** – Supt. Neil Loudon, North Kent and Swale

**Kent Fire and Rescue Service** – Phillip Rice, Group Manager, West Kent

**NHS Kent and Medway CCG** – Mike Gilbert, Executive Director, Corporate Affairs

**Kent County Council** – Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport (who consulted with Mike Hill, Cabinet Member and Shafick Peerbux, Head of Community Safety)

**Kent Surrey and Sussex CRC** – Stephen Peel, Senior Probation Officer

**Dartford Borough Council** – Councillor Jeremy Kite, Leader

- 3.2 Responses were received from each of the above indicating considerable majority support for the de-merger, with some having been very positive about the proposal. Dartford Borough Council made clear that they would have preferred the Partnership to remain a joint one but agreed to respect Gravesham's wish to have an independent CSP and therefore, conceded to a de-merger. Dartford colleagues have agreed to work with us to ensure that we now achieve this in an orderly way.
- 3.3 The only potential issue flagged by Kent Police was that the move would increase the number of meetings that the Area Commander would be invited to attend and that it may mean that the CSU Inspector would need to cover some meetings instead. We confirmed that we would be happy with this arrangement as we feel certain that the representation of Kent Police by the local CSU Inspector, who will have the operational and detailed knowledge of the issues within our area, will be very helpful. We have been mindful of not placing additional burdens on partners' time and have indicated that we will also look at making the remote joining of meetings an option to make attendance easier. Quarterly meetings would hopefully not be overly onerous and quarterly meetings are, in fact, the norm in other Districts.
- 3.4 It seems that putting forward a de-merger has also come at a fortuitously advantageous time: KFRS, NHS Health/CCG and KSS CRC/Probation are all currently in the process of completing the restructuring of their own services and are looking at making participation in CSPs a responsibility for potentially more operational representatives as they feel this would be more helpful.
- 3.2 Changes implemented through the Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011 passed the authority for approving the merger (and by implication de-merger) of CSPs from the Home Office to Police and Crime Commissioners. An application was submitted on 13 October 2020 to obtain the formal approval for the de-merger from the Kent PCC, Matthew Scott. A response was received from the Commissioner on 14 October 2020 confirming his support and approval. Consequently, the meeting of the CSP held on 15 October 2020 was able to confirm that this was the last joint meeting that would be held, that the joint Partnership has now effectively been dissolved and that each Borough will progress with the establishing of their own dedicated CSPs.
- 3.3 In the light of Gravesham's withdrawal, there is no advantage to completing a joint Strategic Assessment of crime and disorder this year. Therefore, it was recommended to and agreed by the CSP meeting on 15 October that individual Assessments would be completed for each Borough. This will also help begin the process of having a firm focus on local priorities and putting in place programmes of work to fully address those priorities at Borough level.

3.4 A delegated decision has been 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 (signed on 15 October 2020) in order that a dedicated District-level Partnership can now be established. The Statement of Independent Cabinet Member's Decision has now also been published.

#### 4. Anticipated timetable moving forward

4.1 A draft timetable is provided below of key work to be concluded over the next few months following the withdrawal from the joint Partnership to establish a Gravesham CSP:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Report Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee	12 Nov 2020
Amendment to the Council's Register of Partnerships to reflect the new CSP	Nov 2020
Completion of annual Strategic Assessment (audit of crime and disorder)	Nov-Dec 2020
First meeting of the new Gravesham CSP which will consider/agree: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New draft Terms of Reference, organisational structures, reporting processes, title and logo for the CSP;</li> <li>• Findings of the Strategic Assessment and proposed priorities for a new Community Safety Strategy;</li> <li>• The format of the public consultation exercise to be followed on identifying community safety priorities.</li> </ul>	14 Jan 2021
Report to Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee on the de-merger and new CSP.	21 Jan 2021
Completion of the public consultation process on community safety priorities, and assessment of findings (which will need to be fed into the new Strategy).	Late Jan-Feb 2021
Preparation of a draft Community Safety Strategy (public facing) and underpinning Action Plan (internal working document)	Feb-Mar 2021
Approval of the draft Community Safety Strategy and Action Plan	Mid-late Mar 2021
Formal launch of the new CSP and Strategy	April 2021

#### 5. Conclusion

5.1 Community safety, crime and ASB are a key priority for local people and matters that are high on the public agenda. Establishing a new CSP dedicated to the Borough should invoke increased confidence amongst local people that the Council takes these matters very seriously and that a strong multi-agency relationship exists that is working proactively and collaboratively to reduce crime and disorder. The creation of a new CSP will provide an opportunity to give the Partnership a stronger profile than has previously been possible as a primary vehicle for tackling these issues at a local level.

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<b>Legal</b>	The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory duty on 'responsible authorities' to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder. Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) are made up of representatives from the following responsible authorities: police; local authorities; fire and rescue authorities, probation/community rehabilitation services; health authorities (clinical commissioning groups). The de-merger of the joint Partnership has been formally approved by the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner (under powers vested in him through the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011).
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	The move to an independent Gravesham CSP rather than a joint Dartford and Gravesham CSP does not carry any financial implications. Funds used to support community safety activity are through the Council's internal budget (which will not be affected) and through funding secured by the Community Safety Unit through external bidding processes. A locally-focussed CSP will be cost-effective as officer time will be dedicated to local issues rather than on occasion having to take account of community safety matters across both Dartford and Gravesham.
<b>Risk assessment</b>	Failure to have an effective Partnership in place would be damaging to the Council's reputation and be a failure of the duty created by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	<i>A data protection impact assessment (OPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <u>personal data</u> or <u>special category data</u> or <u>criminal offence data</u>? No.</li> <li>If yes to question a., have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/a</li> <li>If no to question b., please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at <a href="mailto:gdp@medway.gov.uk">gdp@medway.gov.uk</a></li> </ol>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? No.</li> <li>Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? Yes – it will increase our ability to focus on areas and communities that experience crime and ASB disproportionately.</li> </ol>
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
<b>Corporate Business Plan</b>	The establishing of a District-level CSP makes a direct contribution to improving public safety linked to People and Place in the Council's Corporate Plan.
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The Gravesham CSP will be a key driver of the Council's programme of work to improve community safety and reduce crime and ASB.
<b>Climate Change</b>	None.
<b>Digital/website website implications</b>	Once established, the Community Safety pages on the Council web-site will need to be updated. The public consultation process in developing the new Community Safety Strategy will need to be an online survey and the final Strategy should be published on the Council's website.
<b>Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</b>	The safeguarding of vulnerable young people and adults is a high priority for the Council and partner agencies and this will be reflected in the new Community Safety Strategy.