

## **Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee**

**Wednesday, 21 April 2021**

**7.30 pm**

### **Present:**

Cllr Baljit Hayre (Chair)  
Cllr Christina Rolles (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:       Derek Ashenden  
                          Helen Ashenden  
                          Ejaz Aslam  
                          Dakota Dibben  
                          Aaron Elliott  
                          Brian Francis  
                          Gary Harding  
                          Emma Morley  
                          Leslie Pearton  
                          Lauren Sullivan  
                          Tony Rana  
                          Frank Wardle

Please note: Cllr Brian Sangha was also in attendance.

Simon Hookway	Assistant Director (Communities)
Kath Donald	Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit)
Sean Steer	Operational Manager (Community Safety Unit)
James Beautridge	Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police
Ben Clarke	Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

### **9. Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **10. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 21 January 2021 were signed by the Chair.

### **11. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Leslie Pearton declared an interest as his daughter worked for Kent Police as a Warden in Rochester.

### **12. Gravesham CSP Draft Community Safety Strategy**

The Committee were provided with the draft Community Safety Strategy 2021-24 that had been prepared by the Council's Community Safety Unit (CSU) on behalf of the newly established Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The Strategy provided the

foundation for the direction of multi-agency community safety activity in the Borough over the next three years.

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) guided Members through the detailed report and highlighted key points from the Community Safety Strategy.

Members noted that the following had been identified as the five key priorities for the Strategy; a detailed rationale for each priority was listed in the report:

- Violent crime including domestic abuse
- Persistent anti-social behaviour and environmental crime
- Preventing offending and reducing re-offending
- Protecting vulnerable people and strengthening communities
- Communication and engagement

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) advised Members that as it was no longer a joint Strategy and Gravesham's partner representatives had total control, the fifth priority 'Communication and Engagement' was able to be added in. The Council felt strongly about the priority as it would improve communication between Gravesham's partners and the public, improve communicating the effect on the Borough that the Partnership' work has achieved so far, further report Gravesham's accomplishments and provide increased methods of listening to what the public wanted.

The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) was waiting to hear final feedback from the other partners to see what they wanted included in the Strategy and following that the Community Safety web pages would be updated as they had expired since the end of the previous partnership.

The findings of the public consultation are also summarised in the Strategy and would be included in the new Community Safety web pages.

Following questions and comments from Members, the Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) explained that:

- The Council had information readily available on the website informing the public where/how to report crime and ASB; if it was low level anti-social behaviour or a historical crime then the public are encouraged to report it to 101. However, if it was a serious crime or an incident occurring presently with an immediate risk of harm then the public are encouraged to call 999. If a member of the public is concerned about reprisals, then they could contact Crime Stoppers and report the crime completely anonymously
- At Gravesham Council events, there was usually a CSU stall and the safety shop usually runs for a week in December where information is provided to the public on how to report various different types of crimes and crime prevention advice is offered
- The CSU team were very conscious of the fact that a percentage of domestic abuse victims were men, and it was recognised that there was likely a lot of underreporting of domestic abuse especially from men due to the stigma around it. Much of the work being undertaken by the CSU team was around encouraging domestic abuse victims to come forward and seek help; the point was stressed to Members that the CSU did not differentiate based on gender, any and all victims would receive as much help as they needed to escape domestic abuse and receive due care. The CSU team would

continue to raise awareness of domestic abuse so that not only could it be prevented but staff could also recognise the signs of someone being abused

- Events purely for male victims had been run in the past but the Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) agreed to look into creating more promotional work to encourage men to come forward
- The Operational Manager (Community Safety Unit) and the Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) recently met with Natalie Brown who was the lead officer for Safeguarding and discussed the rollout of the Safeguarding training programme for Members and staff. She was working on it and had completely reviewed and revised the previous Safeguarding Policy that was in place; the training programme is being amended to include training on how to spot the signs of safeguarding issues as well as possible cases of modern slavery. It was important that Members and staff were provided with the training as soon as possible and work was underway to get it into the Member training schedule for 2021-22
- The Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) attended the first meeting of a new Domestic Abuse Partnership Board set up by KCC a few weeks ago and was also asked to attend a media group meeting as she raised the issues disabled people faced and the need for engagement and effective communication with the disabled population. As Cllr Harding had raised the points regarding disabled victims, the Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) agreed to send him the minutes of that Board meeting. The minutes would also reflect the discussions held on the pieces of work the Board wanted to do with local charities; the aim was to create a calendar of friendly events throughout the year in order to raise awareness. Events such as Disability Awareness week would also be opportunities for communities to be reached out to that found it more difficult to access services

The Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police agreed with the points made regarding reporting crime and expanded further; the public should call 999 if there was imminent danger to themselves or someone else, call 101 for general crime reporting, report it online through the Police website or contact a force operator through the web live chat where they would provide assistance and transfer people to the correct department.

With regards to ensuring the safety of callers/witnesses to crimes, the Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police advised that there were several different things the Police could do such as the most extreme like putting a witness into a witness protection programme. On the lower end of the scale, CCTV cameras could be installed on a property as well as alarms and patrols by uniformed officers. The Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police advised that it was normal for there to be a level of fear of reporting crimes, but the public were encouraged to report anything they thought could be of interest even if they did it completely anonymously as the smallest bit of information could be crucial in some cases.

The Chair thanked the Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit) for the comprehensive summary of the report and the hard work that had gone into making the Strategy.

### **13. Nuisance Vehicles - E-scooter, quad-bikes/mini-motos and irresponsible cycling**

The Chair advised that Cllr Sangha and Cllr Aslam had requested the item to be brought to the Committee; the Chair had agreed that Cllr Sangha would be invited to address the Committee following the Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police.

The Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police addressed the Committee and gave a detailed presentation on nuisance caused by E-Scooters, what the Police were doing to combat the issue and several cases where a successful prosecution had been made. Some of the key points made to Members were:

- E-Scooters were classified as vehicles and in order to drive them on the road, the user needed a driver's licence, MOT, and insurance; if they did not have those things, they were only permitted to drive them on private land. No insurers would insure a scooter and there were currently only a few areas in London and Canterbury where E-Scooters schemes were being trialled by the local authorities
- There were a variety of different users; there were the youths that were riding them dangerously but there were also commuters who used them to be greener and some found them convenient instead of using a car to get to work or the train station. There was a lack of public awareness that E-Scooters were illegal to use on the road and that is why officers initial approach was to inform users when they were stopped the first time with a talk and a leaflet.
- Kent Police had an officer in place that was dedicated to deal with the problem of E-Scooters, and they had been working on a detailed plan to tackle the issue; that detailed plan would be shared with the CSU team once it was completed
- A database had been created which was in its infant stages but could be accessed by all North Kent Police Officers; every time an E-Scooter driver was stopped their details would be inputted into the system and given their first warnings. If they were stopped a second time, then they would receive a section 59 warning and a third stop would mean that their E-Scooter was seized under Section 59. The officers could also summon the drivers to court for having no insurance; the leaflet that was being used had been forwarded to the CSU team and would be included in the next edition of the 'Your Borough' magazine
- Youths on the E-Scooters were difficult to catch; they had no recognisable plates and would often mount the kerb or drive down alleys to escape officers. The E-Scooters could reach speeds of 20-30 mph and officers were not able to pursue them in a tactical pursuit using Police vehicles as it would be too dangerous
- It was likely that one day more schemes would be rolled out to other areas trialling the E-Scooters with proper checks as it was greener and would remove a number of vehicles off the road but currently the Police were treating it as the illegal issue it was

The Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police gave a brief summary to the Committee on Kent Police's plans to deal with off-road motorcycles:

- There was a rural team in place which consisted of two PCSO's and another officer was returning to the team specifically to deal with anti-social behaviour in the rural areas of North Kent. A sergeant from the Maidstone Rural Task Force had also agreed to provide assistance to the rural team in the summer as the special constable embargo during Covid had been lifted
- The Specials Inspector had advised the Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police that there were fourteen Special officers who were freshly trained and ready to be made available which would greatly assist the rural team in the summer
- Community Protection Orders had been looked into for the landowners that were not adequately protecting their land and relying too much on the Police
- Operation Gurkha is targeting nuisance motorbikes and anti-social behaviour will be run every two weeks to keep the pressure on and force the motorbike users to move on from the affected areas or stop entirely. The community would be engaged with

better, mobile numbers for officers working in the area had been given to Parish Councils so that they could report any crimes directly which meant a much faster response time

- Footfall had skyrocketed in the Town Centre since restrictions had been lifted but that also meant cases of theft had also risen although there hadn't been too much trouble from the pubs reopening. The team were constantly aware of the announcements made by the Prime Minister and were adapting all the time; resources and measures were being moved into place in light of the Government's Roadmap. For example, if pubs were breaking the rules, then Kent Police would look to get publicans licences revoked and drug dogs and the British Transport Police would be stationed at the train station to deter county lines drug dealing

The Chair thanked the officer for his detailed presentation and was encouraged to hear the fourteen officers that would be made available to assist the Rural Policing Team.

Cllr Sangha addressed the Committee and outlined his reasons for being against the E-Scooters and gave numerous examples of the nuisances they caused in his ward and the wider Borough:

- Cllr Sangha explained the risks the E-Scooters caused to the general public as well as to the drivers and passengers themselves; Cllr Sangha cited a number of occasions where he had seen drivers with too many passengers, some as young as babies, no safety equipment or who were heavily overloaded and had the potential to cause major accidents on the pavements/roads
- They posed a risk to the public and Cllr Sangha had received many complaints from residents in his ward concerned about users driving them through pedestrianised zones at fast speeds or driving dangerously doing wheelies etc
- A Strategy needed to be created that focused on education, advice, and enforcement with actual targets to reach in order to stop youths driving dangerous and raising awareness of the illegality of E-Scooters

Cllr Sullivan asked to meet with the Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police outside of the meeting to discuss community policing and how it could benefit her ward.

The Committee echoed the comments around engaging with the urban and rural communities equally and raising awareness as well as sharing cases where nuisance bikers had affected their wards.

In response to a Members question, the Chair welcomed that the raising awareness leaflet would be included in the 'Your Borough' magazine.

Cllr Rana asked that his thanks be noted for the PCSO's in Whitehill and Singlewell as they had cracked down on petty theft and crime leading to the crime rate dropping in the area.

The Chair queried if there was any way of using a DNA spray on stopped scooters which could be used to identify them in later stops.

The Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police explained that he wasn't aware of any such spray and advised that the stop was always based on the driver rather than the vehicle.

**14. Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel - Minutes of the meeting held 8 December 2020**

The Committee were presented with the minutes of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 08 December 2020.

The Committee discussed and noted the minutes.

**Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified