

Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 7 October 2021

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Baljit Hayre (Chair)
Cllr Peter Scollard (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Derek Ashenden
 Helen Ashenden
 Ejaz Aslam
 John Caller
 Dakota Dibben
 Aaron Elliott
 Brian Francis
 Gary Harding
 Nirmal Khabra
 Leslie Pearton
 Tony Rana
 Frank Wardle

Simon Hookway
Sean Steer
Junior Dann
James Beautridge
Lorna Nolan
Steve Nolan
Julie Francis-Beard

Assistant Director (Communities)
Community Safety Operations Manager
Chief Inspector, District Commander Kent Police
Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police
Gravesham Sanctuary
Gravesham Sanctuary
Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

15. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Elizabeth Mulheran. Cllr Nirmal Khabra attended as her substitute.

16. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 21 April 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

17. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Leslie Pearton declared an interest as his daughter worked for the Prison Service.

18. Activity of the Gravesham Vulnerability Panel (GVP) (Community Safety Partnership Sub-Group)

The Chair welcomed Steve and Lorna Nolan from Gravesend Sanctuary and Junior Dann, Chief Inspector, District Commander Kent Police and James Beautridge, Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police to the Committee.

The Community Safety Operations Manager apologised for the use of an acronym on page 11, he confirmed it stood for house in multiple occupation.

The Committee were provided with an overview of the Gravesham Vulnerability Panel meeting and discussed Case Studies.

The Gravesham Vulnerability Panel had been established through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The Panel was a multi-agency group and comprised of representatives from a very wide range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations. They met on a monthly basis, virtually by Teams, and the meeting was chaired by Kent Police (usually the CSU Inspector or Sergeant) and was administered by the Community Safety Unit.

The Community Safety Operations Manager informed the Committee that the Gravesham Community Safety Partnership were reviewing the Terms of Reference and an update would be provided at the next Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee.

Case Studies

The Community Safety Operations Manager introduced Case Study 1 referred to in the report and added the following:

A representative from the Gravesham Vulnerability Panel (GVP) informed the Community Safety Operations Manager that agencies had come to rely on the GVP as they gave valuable support and resources to enable adults to receive advice from other agencies and that they felt supported throughout the process. This enabled the vulnerable person to recover from their long journeys.

A short testimonial from Look Ahead:

I have come to rely on GVP for invaluable information and advice. It has proved to be a vital resource to enable me to assist my customers. To be able to have access to so many different professionals for help and advice has brought about greatly improved outcomes for the customers I support. I know that I have access to a wealth of knowledge in my continued support of this customer. These are resources that I may not otherwise have been aware of.

Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge, Kent Police introduced Case Study 2 and Steve and Lorna Nolan from Gravesend Sanctuary introduced Case Study 3.

Steve Nolan thanked the Council and the Committee for their support with the Gravesham Vulnerability Panel and the help with all the complex cases that had been referred, working alongside a number of other agencies.

The Chair thanked Steve and Lorna Nolan, James Beautridge, Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police and the CSU team for their contribution to these case studies.

Following questions and comments from Members, the Community Safety Operations Manager, Lorna Nolan and Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge the following areas were raised:

- The Committee also thanked all those involved for all the support and guidance they provided and all the good work they do.
- The Committee discussed any prosecutions related to some of the individuals involved in the case studies and the importance of them being looked after and to stop them becoming victims and in some instances the best option is removal from the situation of the vulnerable person. Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge explained that all reports were investigated and were continued to be followed up included through CCTV and discussions with local residents. These vulnerable people received the same level of service as everyone else and due reports made some prosecutions have been made. The Community Safety Operations Manager explained that all additional criminal behaviour is investigated and due to the investigations, a landlord had been served with an Emergency Prohibition Order.
- Homelessness was discussed and the reasons why some homeless person would not report a criminal activity to the Police was they did not want the Police to be aware of the situation. Lorna Nolan explained that there were two types of people in this situation – the vulnerable and those that commit crime. More people have travelled through Gravesham and there were reports that some of those people had exploited homelessness people. As COVID funding finished Gravesend Sanctuary informed the Committee that numbers had increased and they dealt with more people coming straight out of prison. The Community Safety Operations Manager added there were currently weekly meetings of the Rough Sleeper Initiative and a number of sessions run by the Housing Service specialising in rehousing. This could be discussed at a further Committee meeting.
- HMO's (house in multiple occupation) were discussed and whether it was correct for a female to share if the majority of occupants were male. A team specialised in HMO's visit and check the properties on a regular basis. Was there a ratio of female/male that could live in a HMO? The Community Safety Operations Manager did not think that female/male ration could be applied, but will check and come back to the Committee on that point. The Community Safety Operations Manager has since checked and confirmed there is no requirement or ratio requirements.
- A question had been asked about Section 136 of the Mental Health Act. If someone had been vulnerable to themselves and anyone else could you use that to make sure they go into an institution? Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge informed the Committee that could only be used if they were out in public and they needed immediate help. Under Section 136 they could only be held for a short amount of time to allow safeguarding and to receive immediate help that would be required from the Mental Health Team or the Crisis Team and if deemed they could section the person. Under Section 136, an individual would not be removed from their own home.

The Chair thanked the Community Safety Operations Manager for the comprehensive report and all the hard work especially during this Pandemic.

The Committee noted the report.

19. Town Centre Policing Update

The CSU Inspector, Kent addressed the Committee and gave a detailed update on the Town Centre Policing.

The team comprised of 3 Constables and 2 PCSO's. Over the last 3 months 66 arrests had been made, 28 recalls to prison, 43 stop and search completed, 138 intelligence reports that fed back into seven public notices. A number people locked up had been shoplifters, drug dealers and people exploiting the homelessness.

The team targeted shops in the Town Centre that had been selling illegal tobacco. They found 11 shops that sold illegal cigarettes. There had been a great working partnership with GBC, Trading Standards, Revenue and Customers and the Immigration Service and over 3 days – 50,000 cigarettes, 239 pouches, mobile phones, 2 cars and £1,440 cash had been seized and 11 closure orders issued. Although a closure order was for a maximum of three months, the team will continue to close these premises if needed.

Night Time Economy – footfall had increased in the Town Centre since restrictions had been lifted but no major incidents had occurred in Gravesend. Safer Streets team increased patrols on foot and continued to be visible. There had been a number of isolated knife crimes prior to start of the summer holidays. Increased Section 60 powers have been used which allowed police officers to stop and search. Patrols will be increased due to Halloween and fireworks coming up.

Arrangements are being made for a seasonal safety shop in December. The Community Safety Operations Manager to confirm more details when known. The Chair asked Councillors if any were interested in going out with the Police to contact Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge.

Following questions and comments from Members, the Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge highlighted the following:

- How many shops selling illegal cigarettes have been prosecuted? The Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge explained that, regarding the 11 shops that had been selling cigarettes that were closed down, they had pursued the best option which had been the closure order.
- Younger people need to be targeted to make more of an impact on how dangerous these illegal cigarettes are. A Police Officer will shortly be allocated to each secondary school in Kent to educate the children especially in knife crime. Due to COVID there had been 60 vacancies for this role. Next year, Youth Engagement Officers will work with Primary School children.
- A Committee Member asked what the Police had been doing to safeguard women in light of the current news headlines. A briefing and public engagement document from Kent Police was due out on 8 October. Actions are being planned to improve lighting, CCTV, safe areas, support from the taxi drivers and more officers out on the street.
- Out of the 43 stop and searches what was the breakdown in gender and race? The Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge explained that he would look at the statistics and report back to the Committee. The statistics are published on the Kent Police Website and reported to the Home Office so they are freely available.

The Chair thanked Junior Dann, Chief Inspector, District Commander Kent Police and James Beautridge, Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police for their detailed presentation.

20. E-Scooters Update

The Chief Inspector, Kent Police, Junior Dann and Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police James Beautridge addressed the Committee and gave a detailed update on E-Scooters.

E-Scooters are a national problem. There had been a number of seizures and prosecutions related to E-Scooters. 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, E-Scooters were only permitted to be driven on private land. National chain stores selling E-Scooters have been asked by the Police to inform customers of this.

There had been a lack of public awareness that E-Scooters were illegal to use on the road and that is why the officers' initial approach was to inform users when they were stopped the first time with a talk. A database had been created and if they were stopped a second time a Section 59 warning would be issued. A third time and the Police had the powers and, to date, 12 E-Scooters had been seized and crushed due to this Section 59 warning.

The number of road bike incidents had gone down but E-Scooters had increased.

Following questions and comments from Members, Chief Inspector, Junior Dann and the Acting CSU Inspector, James Beautridge, the following areas were raised:

- The safety of E-Scooters was discussed and the Community Safety Operations Manager explained that a young person had been knocked off his E-scooter and had been seriously injured. The parents had not realised how dangerous these bikes were.
- It is hard to hear the scooters approaching especially with a hearing impairment.
- Increased publicity regarding the dangers of these scooters in the run up to Christmas. Children use these E-Scooters to get to and from school so approach schools to see if an email could be sent home to parents to explain E-Scooters are illegal. The Community Safety Operations Manager explained there had been an article in the last Borough magazine, Your Borough, and some schools now do not allow them on their premises. Parents must understand the risks of purchasing them for their children.
- There are a variety of different users; the youths 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.
- The reason why electric bikes do not require insurance and E-Scooters do is that electric bikes require pedalling to get them moving.
- An increase of crime had been linked to the use of E-Scooters – bag snatches, drug dealing and ASB.
- The Chair offered to share the notes from this Committee with other Committees and Councillors.

The Chair thanked Junior Dann, Chief Inspector, District Commander Kent Police and James Beautridge, Acting CSU Inspector, Kent Police for their presentation.

21. Topic Review Update

The Committee were provided with a way forward for the Topic Update associated with this Committee.

The Assistant Director (Communities) guided Members through the report and highlighted key points.

Due to the Pandemic, the two Topic Reviews that were selected by the Committee in January 2020 but had to be put on hold - Knife and Violent Youth Crime and Town Centre Crime, can now progress.

The Membership of the Topic Review Groups was included in the Terms of Reference. A change had been made and new membership for Knife and Violent Youth Crime would be Cllr Tony Rana (Chair), Cllr Elizabeth Mulheran (Vice-Chair), Cllr Gary Harding and Cllr Derek Ashenden.

The membership for Town Centre Crime would be Cllr John Caller (Chair), Cllr Brian Francis (Vice-Chair) and Cllr Ejaz Aslam and Cllr Frank Wardle.

It was proposed that the Knife and Crime Centre Topic Review report its finding to the next meeting of this Committee on 20 January 2022 and that the Town Centre Topic Review reports to Committee at the subsequent meeting on 15 March 2022. A start had been previously made with a 'round table' meeting on knife crime and the Assistant Director (Communities) will share notes of that meeting.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director (Communities) for the summary of the report.

The Committee noted the report and confirmed the chairing and membership of the two Topic Reviews, as discussed above and agreed to the timing for reporting of these as proposed in paragraph 1.2.3 of the report.

22. Minutes of the latest publication of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel

The Committee were presented with the minutes of the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 17 June 2021.

A further meeting held on 7 September took place. The minutes were not available for that meeting but are on the KCC website. Cllr Mochrie-Cox was Gravesham's representative for that meeting.

The Committee noted the minutes.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm