

Classification: Public
Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee
Date: 14 March 2023
Reporting officer: Strategic Manager (Community Safety Unit)
Subject: Response of the Gravesham Community Safety Partnership – Recommendations from the CDSC Topic Reviews

Purpose and summary of the report:

Following the completion of both the Knife Crime and Serious Youth Violence and Town Centre Crime Topic Reviews, the Committee agreed a series of findings and recommendations to be reported to the Gravesham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) at its next meeting. This report now provides the Committee with the response of the CSP to the recommendations made and the steps that are already being and will be taken to progress them.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to:

- i) Note the response of the CSP to the recommendations made by the Committee's Topic Reviews and offer comment upon the suggested actions that are being taken or that are planned as appropriate.

Key Implications:	
Item	Implications
Legal	The Council has a statutory obligation to work with partner agencies to address crime and ASB and Serious Organised Crime (Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Serious Organised Crime Act 2015, Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022). The Crime and Disorder Act also requires the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the work of the CSP and following the amendment of the Act in 2022, the Committee now also has a duty to monitor specific work of the CSP to address serious violent crime.
Finance and Value for Money	There are no identified or specific financial implications.
Corporate Plan	Work undertaken by the Gravesham CSP makes a direct contribution to People and Place in the Corporate Plan through addressing and aiming to prevent and reduce crime and ASB.
Climate Change	No direct implications.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee in October 2022 was presented with the findings of both the Knife Crime and Serious Youth Violence and Town Centre Crime Topic Reviews. Both the Topic Review Sub-Groups made a number of recommendations based on the issues that the review process had found to be most pertinent and in need of prioritisation by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). These recommendations were then reported to the CSP at its next meeting which took place in January 2023.
- 1.2 For ease of clarification, the recommendations made by the separate Topic Review Sub-Groups are detailed below together with the proposed actions that were considered and have been agreed by the CSP.

2. Knife Crime and Serious Youth Violence Topic Review – Recommendations

2.1 The following recommendations were made by the Topic Review Sub-Group as key tasks that could be taken on board and progressed by the CSP:

- i) That partners work together to ensure that knife crime and serious youth violence statistics are not provided or shared in isolation but alongside contextual information to give a more accurate picture of the level and nature of these crimes, this being particularly important when statistics or data are made available in the public domain.
- ii) That the CSP review and agree the best means to communicate information on crime issues with local people to keep them informed of the 'real' level of crime in the Borough i.e., making clear that compared to many areas, including some other Kent Districts, crime in Gravesham is not high and the Borough is a safe place in which to live and work. This will help to build confidence, maintain perspective and challenge poor perceptions that are held.
- iii) That efforts be made to raise awareness of the wide range of youth activities that are available to young people across the Borough, most of which are free of charge, and how to access them so that more young people will be encouraged to take part.
- iv) To understand and promote the beneficial role of Neighbourhood Watch in local communities, review the current number of active Schemes, identify areas in which Schemes could be introduced and to explore opportunities to support the expansion of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes more broadly within Gravesham.

2.2 Actions agreed by the CSP in response to the above recommendations:

- i) **The CSP found that both Recommendations i) and ii) above were concerned with communication and that whilst the CSP has adopted a Communications Framework, this suggested that this work needed to be reinforced.**
 - **Clear information sharing process** - sharing of information between partner agencies, particularly after any incident that is attracting media interest or public attention, needs to be timely. Whilst communication between partner agencies is good, a clearer process could be developed to reduce delays in communication and to ensure that partners are apprised of incidents as early

as possible. Where feasible, joint/collaborative responses from the relevant partner agencies involved will be beneficial both in reassuring the public that we are working together and in ensuring that there is a clear, unified, and consistent message irrespective of which partner agency may be contacted by the public or media.

- **Providing context** - any publication of crime/ASB data that is going to be made available in the public domain should be accompanied by contextual information from all relevant partner agencies. This will avoid data being misinterpreted or causing the public to perceive that a particular issue is a much bigger problem than it is in reality. This could be achieved by partners ensuring that other relevant CSP partner agencies have an opportunity to comment or offer any further details prior to publication.
- **Highlighting positive reductions in crime/ASB** – ensuring that we capitalise on any ‘good news’ e.g., reductions emerging from exercises such as the annual Strategic Assessment or positive impact of specific initiatives, are well-publicised. This could be achieved e.g., through regular joint press releases.

ii) The CSP will aim to raise awareness of youth activities available locally by:

- **Working closely with the VRU** in identifying Gravesham’s hot spots for serious youth violence and targeting engagement work in those areas. CSP resources such as the Soccerena mobile sports equipment will be able to be utilised in hot spots and this interaction with young people can be used as an opportunity to signpost them to other youth activities/sessions.
- **Maintaining contact with KCC Youth Outreach Services and The Grand** CSP partner agencies may deliver community-based/community engagement events where there will be contact with young people. Maintaining a dialogue with both KCC Youth Services and The Grand and inviting them to participate in those would provide an opportunity for them to engage with young people present and promote activities and sessions to them.

iii) Promoting Neighbourhood Watch – NW is represented on the CSP and regularly attends meetings. The CSP (via Gravesham BC’s CSU) could carry out the following as a ‘task and finish’ exercise in conjunction with NW colleagues in 2023-34:

- Map NW Schemes that are already existing and active in Gravesham
- Overlay the mapping information gathered with Ward level data to identify crime/ASB hotspots where there is an absence of NW Schemes
- Work with NW to promote Watches in the areas where they are absent.

3. Town Centre Crime Topic Review – Recommendations

3.1 The following recommendations were made by the Town Centre Crime Topic Review Sub-Group and were reported to the CSP:

- i) That there should be a concerted campaign aimed at changing public perceptions of Gravesend through accurate and positive reporting of the 'real' levels of crime so that fear of crime and negative impressions of risks to personal safety can be minimised.
- ii) Working in partnership is essential to continue achieving further reductions in crime and ASB. This includes not just statutory services and businesses but local residents too. Underlining the message of the need to report incidents is crucial to ensuring that partnership activity and any additional resources are properly targeted.
- iii) There needs to be more effective communication of 'good news' about what the town centre has to offer, ongoing improvements and planned activities, to encourage a greater footfall both in the daytime and the evenings, so that Gravesend builds a reputation of having a safe socialising environment.
- iv) Greater awareness of the range of existing activities that are available for young and consultation with young people about what they feel they would like to see made available to them.
- v) Subject to resources, a series of community events should be held to promote Gravesham as a whole.
- vi) The displaying of messages about expected standards of behaviour e.g., 'Anti-Social Behaviour will not be tolerated', to be promoted.
- vii) Consideration to be given to the creation of a separate website (to promote Gravesend town centre) dedicated to celebrating good news about the Borough e.g., Amazing Gravesham, to supplement the Council's website which is primarily focussed on services and the Discover Gravesham website which concentrates on information for visitors and tourists.

3.2 Actions agreed by the CSP in response to the above recommendations:

- i) **Recommendations i) and iii), as is the case for the Knife Crime and Serious Youth Violence Topic Review, were concerned with communication and emphasised the need to focus on changing negative perceptions of Gravesend town centre. The CSP agreed to address this by:**
 - Forming a PR/Perceptions Task Group to develop a campaign to promote positive news (in respect of crime and ASB) as well as informing the public of what the town centre has to offer in terms of entertainment, events and services. This would help to improve perceptions but also raise the profile of Gravesend more broadly as a place that is welcoming and safe to visit.
- ii) **Encouraging reporting of crime and ASB – the CSP would use existing platforms to encourage reporting including:**
 - My Community Voice – if possible, mapping where there has been an uptake of this and focusing promotion of the app in areas where uptake is low.

- Using publications such as Your Borough and Gravesham BC publications for tenants etc. as opportunities to encourage reporting.
 - Promoting reporting as a social responsibility to create a shared 'zero tolerance' attitude to ASB.
- iii) **The CSP would aim to raise awareness of youth activities available locally and consulting with young people** – suggestions for addressing raising awareness are covered in the response to the same issue on pg. 3 above. In respect of consulting with young people, KCC Youth Services and the VRU were carrying out a consultation with young people in 2022 and the CSP is expecting to receive the information on the outcomes of that consultation shortly. Depending on the findings, specific topics for further consultation with young people may be identified that could then be progressed via the CSP.
- iv) **Community events to promote Gravesham as a whole** – the CSP already holds an Events Calendar, but it is predominantly populated with events that are organised and delivered by Gravesham BC. CSP partner agencies were asked to provide Gravesham BC's CSU with details of any community engagement events that are programmed for 2023-24. This will enable us each to have a fuller picture of events at which we can promote information about various projects, services and other events to raise public awareness of them. This will also allow us to identify opportunities where different partner agencies may be able to join in with an event that is already being arranged by another CSP partner to avoid duplication of effort and maximise use of resources.
- v) **Messaging regarding expected standards of behaviour** – this will be addressed through the campaign to be developed by the suggested PR/Perceptions Task Group i.e., in promoting positive news about the town centre, there should also be an element that focuses on encouraging reporting of unacceptable behaviour.
- vi) **Creation of a new website** – creation of a new/further website as recommended by the Topic Review Group however, it was felt that this would create a considerable burden in terms of regular updating and maintenance that would be required and that there was not currently capacity to commit to this work. However, the Visit Gravesend website is currently being redesigned and the CSP, as part of the adopted Communication Framework has agreed that it would be beneficial to have a dedicated Gravesham CSP website which will be created in 2023-24. These would both provide opportunities, alongside the existing Gravesham BC website, to promote good news to improve public perceptions of the town centre.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 Subject to any further suggestions that the Committee wishes to make, the CSP will continue to progress the actions detailed above. The next Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee scheduled for October 2023 will receive an update on Partnership activity during the first 6 months of the 2023-24 financial year and this will include details of how work resulting from the Topic Review recommendations is developing.

Secondary Implications	
Risk Assessment	Failure to work in partnership with other statutory agencies as required would be to the detriment of addressing crime, ASB and Serious Organised Crime.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) 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></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. N/A</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. N/A</p> <p><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></p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>The Council has a statutory obligation to work with partner agencies to address crime and ASB and Serious Organised Crime (Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Serious Organised Crime Act 2015).</p> <p>The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 Part 2 has introduced a requirement for specified authorities (of which District Councils are one) to collaborate and plan to prevent or reduce serious violence.</p>
Digital and website implications	None at this stage.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	The safeguarding of vulnerable young people and adults is corporately a high priority for the Council, and it is also a strategic priority for the CSP.