

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE EXTERNAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 MARCH
2010**

PRESENT: Councillor Hotson (Chairman)
Councillors Batt, Mrs Gibson, Hinder, Paterson,
Sherreard, Yates and FitzGerald

Co-opted Member – Mr Brian Sangha

118. Apologies.

It was noted that Councillor Marchant and Councillor Mrs Stockell had given their apologies for the meeting.

119. Notification of Substitute Members.

It was noted that Councillor FitzGerald was substituting for Councillor Marchant.

120. Notification of Visiting Members.

It was noted that Councillor Warner was a visiting member with an interest in Agenda Item 6, Safer Maidstone Partnership Scrutiny.

121. Disclosures by Members and Officers:

There were no disclosures.

122. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.

Resolved: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

123. Safer Maidstone Partnership Scrutiny.

Anti-Social Behaviour

The Chairmen welcomed the visitors from the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) to the meeting; partners were invited to speak to the Committee in turn to address the issues raised.

Inspector Sandwell outlined the response circulated to the Committee from Chief Inspector David Pascoe. It was highlighted that the SMP had a priority theme to reduce levels of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and improve confidence in the public's perception of how the partnership tackles ASB. The process for managing ASB calls was outlined to the committee, it was noted that confidence and user satisfaction were high on the Police agenda. A number of resources were allocated to tackle ASB

locally and these were allocated evenly between rural and urban areas. The Police engaged the local community through approaching people direct in the community. With regard to discouraging ASB offences a number of initiatives were in place, restorative justice practices were currently being rolled out across Kent. In relation to young people there were a number of initiatives in place and the Police had made a clear commitment and investment to work with young people in the borough.

Chris Jones, Area Children's Services Officer, Kent County Council (KCC) summarised the paper he had prepared on ASB. Mr Jones highlighted that it was important to understand the context of educational provision in Maidstone. As the area had a selective school system children were often going to school outside of the area they lived, the need for schools to work together was therefore more important in Maidstone. It was explained that schools were independent from KCC, KCC however worked closely with schools to support young people and address issues such as anti-social behaviour.

Linda Prickett, West Kent Primary Care Trust (PCT) explained that the PCT was involved through partnership working in a number of areas to tackle ASB. It was highlighted that Health Visitors focus their work on supporting families in most need, where children are statistically vulnerable to involvement in ASB. The Healthy Schools team contribute to Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) in schools to promote resilience in young people to refuse drugs and alcohol which will help prevent and reduce ASB. The PCT also contributed to work carried out to promote social identity and cohesion with partners and local delivery of services for example in the Fusion Healthy Living Centre, through 'Planning for Real' and was working closely with the Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team (KDAAT).

David Hewetson, Community Safety Unit manager informed the committee that the Community Safety Unit (CSU) was now operational, carrying out joint problem solving between the Police and the Council. It was highlighted that when a call was received by the CSU relating to ASB this was followed up with a home visit. The Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) had a Community Safety Tasking Group with 20 practitioners involved; this group considered problem locations in the borough and identified appropriate intervention and responsible authorities. CCTV now had an additional 7 cameras which were monitored by the CCTV control room and the CSU. The SMP had carried out a strategic assessment in consultation with partners which had developed the future priorities for the SMP as an update to the 3 year partnership plan.

David Petford, Chief Executive and SMP Co-Chairman stated that the Committee should be reassured by the reduction in ASB locally; it was however disappointing that the perception of ASB had not also reduced. The use of the GIS system to tackle and identify ASB was highlighted as an example of successful partnership working. It was identified that it was important to identify genuine ASB versus perceived ASB. Mr Petford stated that he was satisfied with the work carried out by the partnership and that Maidstone remained a good place to live, he had no concerns

about the efforts or resources put into the partnership. The SMP had been considered during a recent IDeA peer review which identified areas that were working well and areas for improvement. There was some duplication in the structure of the SMP and there was an opportunity now to review the roles of the policy and strategy group.

Mr Sangha asked how the SMP identified and evaluated which of the many initiatives they had in place to tackle ASB worked to ensure resources were used in the most effective, targeted and efficient manner. It was explained that the result of many of the initiatives were not necessarily quantifiable and instead results were centred on qualitative outcomes. Mr Petford stated that whilst they did not evaluate every initiative, those initiatives that were unsuccessful would not continue. In answer to further questions from a Member it was highlighted that the GIS system had been useful for identifying where resources were currently allocated. Inspector Sandwell highlighted that they did monitor and evaluate community projects, including through communication with the community. The Safer Maidstone were due to consider monitoring

In answer to a question regarding the age of ASB perpetrators, Inspector Sandwell responded that a proportion related to young people. Ms Latta, Policy Research Officer, Kent Police Authority informed the Committee that she had carried out research which identified that young people did commit more ASB, it was noted however that they were also more likely to be a victim of crime and less likely to report incidents. It was clarified that ASB was recorded through reported incidents rather than crimes, however, some crimes were as a result of and linked to ASB, for example criminal damage. With regard to un-reported crime it was explained that from British Crime Survey Data, an estimated 40% of crime was unreported. It was clarified by Inspector Sandwell that Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts were used in Maidstone and had proved to be a useful sanction to improve behaviour.

The Committee discussed the perception of ASB and agreed that in many cases ASB was not taking place, they identified that as Councillors they were responsible for helping to identify genuine cases of ASB and challenging the perceptions of residents.

Target Setting

Mr Petford explained that targets for the SMP were discussed and agreed by the partners. 9 targets had been developed for 2010-11 and these had been disseminated to practitioners.

Communication with Councillors

The Committee agreed that in the future all SMP scrutiny meetings would be webcast. The Committee discussed the current level of communication with the SMP and agreed that a communication timetable should be developed and agreed so the Committee was given relevant information in a timely manner. The Committee was pleased to hear that the Police and the Council were working together to provide information to residents. The Committee requested that information on public initiatives should be circulated to Councillors.

Resolved: That

- a) The Safer Maidstone Partnership be requested to review the Anti-Social Behaviour activities presently in place to identify those which will deliver maximum value in relation to impact and output and focus resources accordingly
- b) Inspector Sandwell and Ms Latta research the proportion of anti-social behaviour perpetrated by young people and this is reported to the Committee.
- c) Inspector Sandwell circulate to the Committee the number of Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts issued for the financial year 2009/10.
- d) The results of the IDeA Peer review relating to the Safer Maidstone Partnership be circulated to the Committee.
- e) All future meetings of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee meeting be webcast
- f) A timetable of communication with the Crime and Disorder Committee be agreed with the Safer Maidstone Partnership.
- g) The Chairman write to all Councillors to remind them of their role in local communities to reduce the perception of anti-social behaviour.

124. INFORMATION: Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Scrutiny Protocols

Resolved: That the information be noted.

125. Duration of the Meeting

10.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.