

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE EXTERNAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2008**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Hotson (Chairman), Mrs Gibson, Marchant, Mrs Parvin, Paterson, Schnell and Vizzard.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Pollington.

**41. Notification of Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members.

**42. Notification of Visiting Members**

It was noted that Councillors Garland, Ring and Yates were visiting Members who wished to keep a listening brief on all items. Councillor Warner was a visiting Member with an interest in Agenda Item 7, Local Children's Services Partnerships.

**43. Disclosures by Members and Officers**

There were no disclosures.

**44. Exempt Items**

**Resolved:** That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

**45. Minutes**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2008 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman.

**46. Local Children's Services Partnerships**

The Chairman introduced the item to the Committee, highlighting that information on Local Children's Services Partnerships (LCSPs) was vital to ensure that Members could play their part and help to fulfil their roles as Corporate Parents.

Chris Jones, Area Children's Services Officer, Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling from Kent County Council (KCC) stated that LCSPs were a new initiative that were more multi-agency than previous school clusters and existed to improve outcomes for children and families. This had been piloted in Maidstone for the last two years under the "Maidstone 2" LCSP Manager, Hilary MacDonald. Ms MacDonald highlighted that the Children's Trust agenda was well established

nationally; this had arisen from the Victoria Climbié Inquiry and subsequent Children Act 2004. In Kent there was one overarching, multi-agency, strategic Children's Trust that had developed the Kent Children and Young People Plan. From September 2008, there were 23 LCSPs in Kent which were local implementation groups for the overarching Kent Children's Trust. Each LCSP had its own plan, which were evidence-based and reflected local priorities but had clear, direct links to the Kent-wide Plan. The LCSPs were based on the previous "cluster" geography but whereas the clusters had focussed on schools, LCSPs were multi-agency.

A key finding of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry had been the lack of communication between partners. Therefore the LCSPs would work collaboratively to find appropriate ways to provide support to children and families. Maidstone was piloting a Common Assessment Framework to enable this and it would be rolled out across Kent from April 2009.

Sarah Whittaker was the District Manager for children's social services, which worked with children at risk or with high levels of need. It was anticipated that early intervention and preventative measures would lead to fewer children reaching stages of acute need and Ms Whittaker was therefore working with the LCSP to ensure gaps in service provision were filled to deliver this. She also chaired a group looking at the emotional wellbeing of children and young people. In response to a question, Ms Whittaker explained that referrals to her service usually came from an agency such as the police, a school or a health provider where there were serious concerns over the ability of a parent to meet the needs of their children. Through the LCSP, the aspiration was to provide support and avoid the need for statutory intervention.

Heather Keen was the Commissioning Manager for Children and Young People's Health with the West Kent Primary Care Trust (PCT). She chaired the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Group, for which the key message was prevention and early intervention. Work carried out by the Group included mapping service provision, providing multi-agency training and making access to mental health services for young people easier. The needs of specific groups, for example looked-after children or young offenders, were also addressed. Another initiative was the introduction of a parenting programme in a school with high levels of referrals to mental health services and this had reduced the number of referrals.

Inspector Ian Sandwell from Mid Kent Police stated that the Police were part of the LCSP Board because it was important to ensure the safety of young people and reduce the number of young people committing offences. The priorities of the Safer Maidstone Partnership all involved young people to some extent, whether as victims or offenders. Through the Board, initiatives could be established to reduce the chances of young people becoming

offenders, for example the Safer Schools initiative or the Power Project.

Ian Park, Social Inclusion and Community Development Manager for Maidstone Borough Council, was the Council's representative on the Maidstone 2 LCSP. Jacqueline Bryden, Sports, Play and Youth Development Manager, was the Council's representative on Maidstone 1. LCSPs reflected the Council's corporate priorities. As the Council provided a range of services that impacted on young people, from the Youth Forum to housing services, partnership working was vital to ensure that services were being delivered in a joined-up, coherent way. The two key themes for Maidstone 2 were reducing teenage pregnancy and engaging young people in civic life, both of which would contribute to the Council meeting its targets. The LCSPs also gave the Council better access to schools, which, as a district council, it did not have immediate links with. It was proposed that the LCSP would become a sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

Mr Jones summarised by stating that LCSPs aimed to coordinate the work of several different agencies to deliver better outcomes, avoid duplication and ensure the best use of resources. This would also help to improve consistency for families. It was suggested that in the medium term it could be useful to establish a forum for Maidstone Councillors to have periodic discussions about the work of the LCSP to ensure effective communication in both directions.

In response to questions, a number of successes were outlined, including:

- Strong commitment from schools and partners at a senior level;
- Detailed work looking at what services were provided, the value for money provided by these services, any overlaps and any gaps in service provision;
- Maidstone Families First project, which provided, at little cost to the Partnership, three therapeutic support and advice sessions to families in the early stages of difficulty to help them manage the situation themselves. These sessions were run in the Children's Centre at Southborough School and approximately half of the families who had attended had not required further support;
- 43 children who were subject to safeguarding plans attended the Hotfoot Playscheme this year as a result of the LCSP, which funded an additional member of staff. This had helped those families to cope over the summer holiday;
- The LCSP meant that the Council had better links with child social services. This enabled a more knowledgeable response to some of the issues that arose with vulnerable children on the Hotfoot Playscheme; and
- An increasing number of children were starting school without the social or emotional skills to cope with this. Through the

LCSP, provision had been established in a special school to allow children to attend for a short period of time to develop the skills needed to reintegrate to mainstream schooling. Previously, those children may have never had access to mainstream schooling. This was different to provision for children who had long-term needs.

A Councillor asked about reporting cases of truancy and Mr Jones stated that members of the public contacting the Children and Families Department about this would be directed to an Educational Welfare Officer attached to the appropriate LCSP. In disadvantaged areas, schools often employed Family Liaison Officers who worked closely with these officers to tackle truancy. Inspector Sandwell highlighted that the police worked with the Educational Welfare Officers on truancy operations. There was also a Youth Crime Reduction Officer who worked proactively with schools, and the Youth Offending Service also played a part.

A Councillor asked how families reacted if they were identified as needing support. Ms MacDonald stated that work was being carried out to develop positive relationships between schools or nurseries and homes, and to ensure that parents saw help as an opportunity rather than a criticism. Activities included arts and sports so that centres were not seen as places of authority. Families were included in the process to ensure that they received the help that they wanted and needed, rather than being dictated to. Families had to sign permissions to receive help or to allow their children to receive help.

In response to a question, Ms Whittaker informed Members that Contact Point was an initiative to help track and coordinate the services provided to a child. When this was established nationwide, a child could be tracked across authorities so that they did not get 'lost' when families moved. Professionals would be able to see what services a child had received and who had been the lead professional for that child at any given time. A child would not need a birth certificate to be listed on Contact Point. Ms Whittaker stated that KCC would authorise the users of Contact Point as the lead organisation on the project. Access would be limited to specified professionals, all of whom would be trained and receive Criminal Record Bureau checks. Agencies would only be granted access if they had a clear need to access the information. Procedures and protocols were still being established and this would become clearer in the coming months. Members requested that an update be provided at that time.

With regard to councillors being appointed to the LSP and having input to the LCSP as a sub-group, Mr Park stated that the operation of the LSP was currently being developed and this would need to be taken up with the Leader of the Council as the LSP Chairman. He clarified that the LSP did have all-party representation.

A Councillor asked about funding and Mr Jones stated that improving life chances for children was high on the Government's agenda and was likely to remain so, therefore funding was unlikely to be threatened in the near future. Work was also ongoing to ensure that the LCSP made the best use of its resources. With regard to performance, results were assessed against stated targets to measure the impact and value for money of a service.

The Chairman requested that an update be provided in a year's time and noted that the improved joint working was a positive step forward. The need for earlier support had been missed in the past so the emphasis on this was welcomed.

**Resolved: That**

- a) Information on access to the Contact Point database be provided when this was available; and
- b) An update on Local Children's Services Partnerships be provided in October 2009.

**47. Anti-Social Behaviour in the Borough**

The Community Safety Co-ordinator, David Hewetson, highlighted that there had been dramatic improvements in anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the past three years. This was due, in part, to the appointment of an Operational Controller, Richard Wingett, who had begun working for the Council in July 2007. Mr Wingett had a remit to co-ordinate the work of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Environmental Crime teams, and to improve partnership working. The introduction of Neighbourhood Policing under Inspector Ian Sandwell in the rural areas and Inspector Adam Jones in the urban areas had also had a positive effect. Mr Hewetson and Mr Wingett then outlined a number of operations and actions that had been undertaken by the Council and its partners to tackle anti-social behaviour and this is attached at **Appendix A**.

Inspector Sandwell stated that partnership working between the Council and the Police was working very well. The Police produced a profile each month of crime and ASB 'hotspots' and partners could then tackle these together. Resources for neighbourhood policing had greatly improved and this had resulted in a fall in the amount of ASB.

The Committee then discussed a number of points:

- Members complimented the Police and the Council's officers for their work and success in tackling ASB;
- National Indicators would be reported on from January 2009 and some of the information for this would come from the Police Management Summary Information Pack that was

produced for the Safer Maidstone Partnership and distributed to Members;

- Some people in rural areas felt that they were not responded to as quickly as those in the urban areas. Inspector Sandwell stated that procedures had been put in place in the last six months to ensure that all reports were dealt with quickly. The Contact Bureau at the Police Station contacted crime victims to ensure that they were satisfied with the service provided and to identify necessary improvements. In rural areas, calls in to the Police Station were e-mailed to officers' mobile phones to ensure that they were received immediately rather than being left on an answering machine;
- The use of Parish forums held by the Police needed to be improved;
- The ASB team at the Council had control of covert CCTV systems and Councillors could raise issues with the team if they felt there were areas requiring use of these;
- The Public Reassurance Group would promote the fact that the Police took all reports of ASB seriously. Neighbourhood Police surgeries and PACT (Police and Communities Together) groups also did this;
- In Maidstone, 7% of people were 'seriously worried' about ASB, which was very positive when compared to the county average of 11%;
- The Police employed an officer qualified by the Home Office in security and architectural issues. The officer worked with the Council's planners to 'design out crime' and developers could apply to him for developments to received "Secured by Design" status; and
- Public participation in PACTs needed to be improved.

The Chairman congratulated the officers on their achievements and asked whether there were problems that Members needed to be aware of. Mr Hewetson highlighted that the economic downturn could lead to an increase in ASB and petty crime and capacity issues meant that the ASB team could not innovate as much as it would like to. Also, crime figures had been dropping for many years, considerably so in the previous 3 years, and this rate of decrease would inevitably halt eventually.

The Chairman thanked the officers for attending and requested as update at the end of the Municipal Year.

**Resolved:** That an update on crime and anti-social behaviour be received at the end of the Municipal Year 2008-09.

#### **48. Highways Report – Kent Highways Services Response**

The Chairman introduced the Kent Highways Services Response to the joint Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Overview and Scrutiny report on communication between district councils and Kent Highways. This response was very positive, with only one

recommendation being rejected. The Joint Transportation Board had also received the response and had noted that there had been an improvement in communication with Kent Highways as a result of the report.

The Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that the next step for the report would be to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and ensure this took place as stated in the response.

**Resolved:** That the response to the Highways Report be noted.

#### **49. Future Work Programme**

The Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer informed the Committee that at the meeting on 18 November 2008, Members would be interviewing the Chief Executive and Director of Civic Engagement from the West Kent NHS, and the Chief Executive of the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

**Resolved:** That the Future Work Programme be noted.

#### **50. Duration of the Meeting**

6:30 p.m. to 8:40 p.m.

# Community Safety Presentation to OSC

David Hewetson – Community Safety Co-ordinator  
Richard Wingett – Operational Controller for Community  
Safety  
Ian Sandwell – Neighbourhood Community Police  
Inspector (Rural) and Partnerships

## **Introduction**

2008, the year thus far – dedicated programme of activity aimed to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime and to raise public awareness of all the work that is being done by local agencies to make sure that our communities remain safe.

## **How Have We Done**

In comparison to this time last year, crime is down, ASB is down, people are feeling safer and the fear of ASB is very low.

All Crime down 12.0%

KCVS Crime down 15.1%  
Criminal Damage down 11.5%  
Theft from Motor Vehicle down 17.0%  
Other Wounding down 12.9%  
Vehicle Interference down 31.1%  
Theft from Person down 18.8%  
Other Theft down 19.9%

## **How Have we Done This:**

- ✓ Op Safer Summer
  - 25 offenders arrested and remanded in custody
  
- ✓ Op Cubit
  - Over 60 vehicles removed from various locations
  
- ✓ Op Othello
  - Mobile police station visited our parks, supported by outreach youth workers



- ✓ Drug Outreach Work, Maidstone Town Centre
  - In partnership with Community Safety and the Police
  - 8 people now in long term treatment
  
- ✓ Designated Alcohol Zones, Maidstone Town Centre
  - 12 seizures of alcohol in the summer with various groups moved on
  
- ✓ ASB Sub Group
  - Multi agency problem solving group to prevent and remove people from the ASB offending stream – focus on early intervention
  -
  
- ✓ Public Reassurance Group
  
- ✓ Multi Agency Group promoting Maidstone as the safe place that it is
  
- Environmental Crime Group
  - Multi Agency Group drawing together all aspects of tackling environmental crime
  -
  
- ✓ Zeroth project
  - Youth intervention programme
  
- ✓ Partnership Safety and Tasking Group
  - Multi agency problem solving group to tackle anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods
  
- ✓ CCTV
  - Greater use of mobile cameras and the new provision of covert cameras

## **Case Studies:**

- ✓ Grove Green
  - Additional Police patrolling
  - Motorbikes seized and other riders warned
  - Community Safety visits
  - overt camera deployments
  - PACT meeting
  - Outreach youth workers
  - Litter enforcement
  - Untidy site enforcement

- ✓ Mangravet
  - Oldborough Manor / New Line Learning Academy
  - In partnership with KCC
  - Three cameras for safer routes to school
  - Designs altered to increase safety
  - Improvements to the immediate area
  
- ✓ CCTV
  - How overt deployments are successful in the reduction of ASB
  - Drawbridge Close
  - Midhurst Court
  - Northumberland Road
  - Bedford Place

## **What Next**

- ✓ Joint agency work underway to reduce firework and 'trick or treat' nuisance
- ✓ One more Op Cubit
- ✓ Joint agency plans for the Christmas period being developed
- ✓ Maidstone Bus
- ✓ Street Pastors