

# **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 13 APRIL 2023**

#### **Attendees:**

<b>Committee Members:</b>	<b>Councillors English (Chairman), Brice, Cannon, Cleator, Conyard, Garten, Hinder, Jeffery, Knatchbull and McKenna</b>
<b>Visiting Members:</b>	<b>Councillor Perry.</b>

128. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

129. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

130. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

131. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Perry was in attendance as a Visiting Member for Item 12 – Strategic Assessment 2023/24 and Partnership Plan Update.

132. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

133. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

134. EXEMPT ITEMS

**RESOLVED:** That all items be taken in public as proposed.

135. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2023

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 March 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

136. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

137. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from Local Residents.

138. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

139. STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT 2023/24 AND PARTNERSHIP PLAN UPDATE

The Community and Strategic Partnerships Manager introduced the report, with the Community Safety Plan (CSP) 2022-2025 having been agreed in 2022 by the Communities, Housing and Environment, Acting as the Crime and Disorder Committee. The annual Strategic Assessment was contained in appendix 1 to the report, with the Community and Strategic Partnerships Manager providing a presentation to the Committee on behalf of the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP).

Crime levels had increased slightly in the past year, with Maidstone having the third highest level of crime in Kent; although violent and public order crimes had fallen, which included domestic violence, violence against persons, and a reduction in anti-social behaviour. Alcohol and substance misuse admissions had increased across the past year.

In relation to the CSP's core priorities, it was highlighted that:

- The SMP was well placed to deliver against the Serious Violence Duty introduced by central government, with a public health approach required to challenge the narrative associated with modern-day slavery, extremism and serious violence, (*Protecting our communities against serious, violent and organised crime (including modern day slavery)*);
- Work continued to ensure awareness of, and the need to tackle, domestic abuse (DA), with the Council's DA forum ensuring that the relevant assessments were carried out as standard process to ensure reporting continued. The statistics relating to domestic abuse across Maidstone as contained within appendix 1 to the report were outlined, (*Reducing the harm caused by domestic abuse*);
- The Town Centre Task Force's establishment (TCTF) had reduced crime in the area by 10% overall, including 9% and 15% reductions in victim-based and society-based crimes respectively. The decline in town-centre based anti-social behaviour (ASB) since the TCTF's operation had been greater than in any other area between June to December 2022. The initiatives provided through the Safer Streets Funding were outlined, (*Provide a safe town centre*); and
- The CSP's alignment to Kent County Council's (KCC) Children's Partnership Group priorities assisted in identifying where young people were at risk, with strategies implemented to reduce risk-taking behaviours, improve safety and reduce harm. The changes to KCC's community services provision were highlighted as requiring further monitoring, (*Keeping children and young people safe*).

The Community and Strategic Partnerships Manager highlighted that cross-cutting themes significantly impacted the plan's priorities, and that a multi-agency approach was important in providing support, managing offenders and reducing re-offending. The importance of improving public perception and confidence was highlighted, which included the continued promotion of the work undertaken by the SMP.

Several Committee Members expressed concern over the crime levels in rural areas, and the important role of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) in tackling local crime. Reference was made to whether there would be enough police resources available to continue this work. In response, the Community and Strategic Partnership Manager briefly outlined the five pillars of Kent Police's proposed neighbourhood policing model and stated that they felt it was a strong model; an all-Member briefing would be held to explain the model to Councillors in the near future.

In relation to the possible reduction in services provided by partner organisations, such as the KCC Community Wardens, the Community and Strategic Partnerships Manager stated that representations would be made by the Council at the appropriate time. The importance of information sharing was reiterated, as police resources were directed to areas where crime was reported. In response to comments raised, the Community and Strategic Partnerships Manager would provide feedback to the Local Children's Partnership Group on the importance of mentoring young people, particularly to support the transition from Primary to Secondary schooling.

In response to questions, the Community and Strategic Partnership Manager stated that:

- The engagement undertaken with elected Members through ward clusters would adapt as the neighbourhood policing model was introduced, with the Community Safety Inspector to be informed of the Committee's comments; the CSP separated data by ward and would provide focus to the proposed Neighbourhood Task Force. The core priorities of the CSP would remain the same;
- Work was being undertaken to place outreach volunteers on trains travelling in and out of Maidstone, with the Committee encouraged to use the 'Railway guardian App';
- The information contained within appendix 1 to the report was provided by other organisations; the Chair of the Safer Maidstone Partnership would be asked to provide greater data sources in future where possible, such as health data;
- The majority of weapons were found through 'stop and search' powers, which had a high success rate due to being intelligence based. As crime reporting had changed in 2017, incidents were often categorised under multiple crimes, which explained the perceived increase in crime. Balanced data would be provided in future years, where the categorisation of crimes would be consistent across the data range;
- The majority of Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) did not require a Community Protection Notice (CPN), as the former were usually effective.

The Council had authorised partners such as Golding Homes and One Maidstone to issue CPWs, with the Council issuing these more effectively than other Kent Authorities; and

- In relation to 'Prevent', far-right ideologies were a stronger influence in the discussions held by the Safer Maidstone Partnership. Bystander Training and a positive masculinity campaign would be provided in the future. Providing policing that was adverse-childhood-experience aware and trauma informed was important in preventing future issues;

The use of funds, including CIL funds, was highlighted as being a potential avenue to provide further support in achieving the CSP aims.

The Committee expressed their thanks to the Community and Strategic Partnership Manager for the work undertaken, with the quality of the report and information contained within appendix 1 noted.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted, alongside the comments made by the Committee.

140. THANKS TO COUNCILLOR BRICE

Councillor Brice was thanked for her work as a Committee Member, as she would not be standing for re-election.

141. DURATION OF MEETING

7.10 p.m. to 8.43 p.m.