

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Community, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee acting as the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2014

Present: Councillor J.A. Wilson (Chairman), and
Councillors Mrs Joy, D Mortimer, Newton, Mrs Parvin,
Round, Sargeant, Mrs Stockell and Vizzard

24. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEB-CAST

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be webcast.

25. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Munford and Watson.

26. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following substitute members were noted:

Councillor Newton for Councillor Munford, and;
Councillor Vizzard for Councillor Watson.

27. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting members.

28. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by members or officers.

29. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED: that the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

30. MINUTES OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2014

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014 had been approved at the Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny meeting of 11 March 2014.

31. SAFER MAIDSTONE PARTNERSHIP (SMP) UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Alison Broom, Chair of the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) and Chief Executive of Maidstone Borough Council and Chief Inspector Simon Wilson, Vice Chair of the Safer Maidstone Partnership, to the meeting.

Alison Broom explained that she was new as Chair of SMP and as yet was to chair a meeting. The SMP had an excellent record of good practice and partnership working and would be focusing on:

- Anti-social behaviour;
- Substance misuse;
- Violent crime.

Specific issues brought to the attention of SMP by officers included legal highs and hoarding.

Ms Broom informed the committee she was involved in other partnerships including West Kent Health and Wellbeing Board, Maidstone Health Partnership, the Kent Action Drug and Alcohol Team and was the district representative on the Kent Child Safeguarding Board. Her membership of these partnerships brought an insight into emerging issues to the committee.

CI Wilson advised the committee that focus on domestic violence and engagement with the victims had resulted in an increase in the reports of violent crime. It was felt that this demonstrated increased confidence in victims of domestic violence to report the crime.

CI Wilson informed the committee of the focus on the day time economy, in particular the street population and creating a safe environment for people to enjoy the night time economy.

The committee was informed that since the last meeting the SMP had received training from a solicitor on the new anti-social behaviour legislation, which had proved very useful.

RESOLVED: That the update on the Safer Maidstone Partnership be noted.

32. ANNUAL STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN

John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services updated the committee on the Annual Strategic Assessment and Community Safety Partnership Plan.

He informed the committee that the SMP were required to produce a five year strategic plan outlining the direction of the partnership. In order to do that an annual assessment was carried out to ensure the strategy met

the demands of the borough and mirrored the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) plan.

The annual refresh was tested against how the community feels. Local forums, parish councils and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were consulted during October and December 2014.

Concern was raised over the Kent County Council review of Community Wardens. It was agreed they were a valuable community resource particularly in rural areas where they dealt with rising anti-social behaviour. It was agreed that it was important Maidstone Borough Council fed into the review consultation.

CI Wilson explained the crime statistics had changed to show five year trends as opposed to year on year, month on month figures. This allowed easier analysis of trends and themes in threats and risks of crime. This in turn facilitated a more considered approach to dealing with crime.

CI Wilson responded to a question on the reduced figures of victim based recorded crimes in some wards. CI Wilson explained that a lot of work had been done focusing on the wards shown in the report but the committee should note the figures represented small numbers of crimes.

It was agreed that a chart showing crime figures compared with other councils would be available at the next committee meeting.

RESOLVED: that:

1. The process and timetable by which the Safer Maidstone partnership produces its annual Strategic Assessment and rolling plan be noted.
2. The date of the next Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to be moved (from 14 April to 10 March 2015) to enable consideration of the Safer Maidstone Partnerships annual Strategic Assessment and rolling plan.
3. The Chair of the committee write a letter to Kent County Councils' Cabinet Member for Community Services to express the committee's deep concern should the Community Warden service cease and to appeal to him to find the funding to ensure its continuation.
4. That the Head of Housing and Community Service and the Chair of the Safer Maidstone Partnership formulate and submit a response to Kent County Councils consultation on the review of the Community Warden service.

33. AMENDMENT TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED: that item 10, Priority Sub-Group Update – Road Safety be moved to the last item on the agenda.

34. PRIORITY SUB-GROUP UPDATE - NIGHT TIME ECONOMY VIOLENT CRIME

The Chair welcomed Inspector Jody Gagan-Cook of Kent Police to the meeting.

Inspector Gagan-Cook informed the committee that Maidstone was one of the safest places in Kent. The Night Time Economy was policed and managed in partnership with other agencies, the Blue Bus volunteers and other volunteers. Time and resources had also been invested in the day time economy resulting in 24/7 policing provided when and where it was needed.

Inspector Gagan-Cook went on to inform the committee that violent crime figures had stayed the same.

The committee heard that the Urban Blue Bus was still in operation but in a different format. Over the past year the Urban Blue Bus had engaged with 65 people during the Night Time Economy and of these 40 had returned to volunteer to help on the bus. The new Urban Blue bus was launched 9 October 2014 and was equipped with beds and provided more facilities.

The committee discussed the cost of policing and clearing up after the Night Time Economy compared to the direct financial gain and agreed this needed exploring.

Inspector Gagan-Cook advised the committee that there were sufficient numbers of security staff on duty during the Night Time Economy. All were licenced and there was always a 'lead bouncer' on duty. Any 'bouncers' found on duty without a licence or were found to have issues with their licence went to be prosecuted. Security staff had meetings every two weeks with the police. Inspector Gagan-Cook emphasised the co-operation and support between the police, clubs, pubs and restaurants and explained they also held briefings before the start of each busy evening.

The committee was informed that the relationship between the police and the CCTV operation worked well, especially when the individual operators knew who they were working with in Maidstone.

The committee agreed if the Portman Group produced a report comparing what different areas did during their Night Time Economy it would be useful if the committee were provided with a copy.

RESOLVED: that the Head of Housing and Community Services provide the committee with an analysis of the costs of policing and clearing up after the Night Time Economy and the financial benefits it provided.

35. PRIORITY SUB-GROUP UPDATE - STREET POPULATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chair welcomed Will Myers, Street Outreach Housing Officer and Kim Flain, Team Leader at the Crime Reduction Initiative to the meeting.

Mr Myers explained he was the project lead for the multi-agency initiative, which started in May 2014, and was based on the principles of the Urban Blue Bus. The project provided a support structure, with other agencies, to the Maidstone street population. The street population was not just homeless people but anyone on the street creating anti-social behaviour and involved a constant 'churn' of people.

Mr Myers went on to inform the committee that initially the project met with resistance from the street population, but in 23 weeks of the project there had been 470 points of engagement. This had resulted in 53 people being housed.

Out of the 91 identified members of the street population 64 were rough sleepers.

Mr Myers advised the committee that housing was provided to people with a local connection (through private rented, social housing providers or long term hostels) anyone without a local connection was returned to the area where they had a local connection.

Kim Flain explained the work of her team. The team employed two outreach workers, one of which was a nurse. The work of the team helped to stop service users disengaging with the Street Population project.

Ms Flain went on to explain there was a monthly clinic at Priority House where clients engaged with mental health practitioners. The outreach nurse operated from Pembury Hospital.

Mr Myers explained that hostel support structures provided high, medium and low support, with the homeless street population in need of high support, which many of them did not want to engage with due to the structure and rules involved.

Mr Myers informed the committee of plans to develop 'spartan' accommodation, where clients who did not meet the criteria for accommodation could live. The accommodation planned would provide minimum entry criteria, minimum house rules and furniture and required only the minimum housing benefit support. This project could potentially remove a large number of street homeless into sustainable accommodation.

Mr Myers explained the project engaged with all age groups but referred them to Social Services Safeguarding team if they were below 16 years old.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing be recommended to explore funding opportunities to ensure the important work of the street population project continues.

36. PRIORITY SUB-GROUP UPDATE - ROAD SAFETY

The Chair welcomed Steve Horton, Road Safety Team, Kent County Council and Stuart Tickle, Kent Fire and Rescue Service to the meeting.

Mr Horton gave a presentation on the statistics for Road Safety in the borough and explained that figures for Maidstone appeared high because it was the most populated and most trafficked borough. Killed or Seriously Injured figures were at or below target.

Mr Horton explained that casualty figures for Maidstone borough showed:

- Motorcycles – up slightly;
- Car users – down;
- Cyclists – up;
- Pedestrians – down.

The main age group involved in crashes were 20-24 year olds.

The largest number of crashes occurred on A26 and B2012.

Mr Horton advised the committee that the Road Safety Team had been working on education projects in local primary and secondary schools and colleges.

Other work had involved speed awareness courses and future campaigns planned were the winter drink drive campaign and the B-Viz campaign in local primary schools.

Mr Tickle gave a presentation and notified the committee of the new Road Safety Centre being built in Rochester.

Events delivered this year to date included:

- 'Carnage' delivered to a school in Queens Road, Maidstone following an RTC (road traffic collision) outside the premises in which students assisted in delivering first aid to victims;
- 50 Mid Kent College young people engaged in Road Safety Awareness through use of an engagement car designed for young drivers;
- Four 'Rush' sessions delivered in Maidstone schools in last quarter to raise road safety awareness.

Mr Tickle went on to advise the committee of events coming up which included:

- Road Safety Week – 17-23 November 2014 – called ‘Look Out For Each Other’;
- Licence to Kill – 19 November 2014 – all councillors were invited to attend;
- A ‘YEARS’ session with young offenders was planned in the new year for Maidstone offenders;
- Fire and Road safety event planned for Invicta barracks on 2 December 2014 for 400 soldiers and their families.

Mr Horton explained to the committee that they were trying to engage with insurance companies and parish councils and wards to provide information on incidents that occurred but were not reported because no one was injured, to provide a more complete picture.

Mr Horton also informed the committee that:

- Rural crashes accounted for more than half of road fatalities in the borough and there had been a surge in accidents on the A274 in Headcorn recently;
- Motorcycle accidents were up with the majority involving younger people in urban settings;
- Single vehicle accidents accounted for more than half of accidents and were mostly in rural settings;
- 20 mile per hour zones can have a calming effect on traffic and more of them may start to appear.

RESOLVED: that the update from the Priority Sub-Group on Road Safety be noted.

37. DURATION OF THE MEETING

18:30 to 20:30pm