

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Acting as the Crime and Disorder Committee, Communities,
Housing and Environment Committee**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER
2018**

Present: Councillors Garten, Joy, D Mortimer, Powell, Purle,
Mrs Robertson and Rose

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Gooch

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Webb.

58. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

59. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

60. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Gooch was present as a Visiting Member and indicated her wish to speak on Item 11. Community Safety Partnership Plan Update.

61. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

62. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

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

Councillor Rose arrived during consideration of this item.

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

64. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed.

65. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

66. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY)

There were no questions from members of the public.

67. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN UPDATE

Inspector Mark Hedges, Kent Police, and Ms Hema Birdi, Kent County Council Early Help Manager, gave a brief presentation. The presentation outlined the fundamental characteristics of a gang, the effectiveness of Criminal Behaviour Orders in dismantling the MS15 gang and the key aspects of work undertaken by the Multi-Agency Gangs Group (MAG).

The Committee considered the presentation and acknowledged the importance of social media as a tool for information sharing. Members recognised that proactive work was key to effective prevention, while young parents in particular would benefit from increased information sharing and advice. The Committee suggested that e-leaflets be made available through school websites to supplement previously distributed hard copies. To support this, coordinated social media activity would ensure that messages reached the widest possible audience. Furthermore, Councillors on school governing boards may be able to encourage schools to sign up to relevant campaigns and promote engagement with parents and young people.

The Committee raised concerns about the trends of knife crime, both nationally and locally. Officers responded that although knife crime had received substantial news coverage, the trends in Maidstone indicated that this had remained static locally. The impact of outward movement from London to areas such as Maidstone, in relation to knife crime, needed to be considered. However, partnership working ensured that anti-social behaviour was being identified more effectively.

Ms Kim Flain, from Change, Grow, Live (CGL), addressed the Committee on the subject of substance misuse and the links with homelessness. Ms Flain outlined the collaborative work that had been undertaken and the positive impact that CGL had made for individuals with substance misuse issues in Maidstone.

Mrs Alison Broom, Maidstone Borough Council Chief Executive, explained to the Committee that funding had been secured up to 2019/20 for project work that was specifically aimed to respond to rough sleeping issues. Consequently, recruitment was underway to expand the capacity for outreach work. The focus of this was to support individuals with complex needs to help them move into, and stay in, accommodation. It

was recognised that in the past, challenges had been experienced when securing housing, but that recently the ability to provide accommodation in Maidstone had improved.

The Committee acknowledged the complexity of working with the service users, as the nature of individual substance misuse impacted upon the support required. A key consideration of the work was therefore to maximise the effectiveness of the service by striking a balance between the quantity and quality of support available. As the work was designed to develop community resilience, in order to break a cyclical return to substance misuse, the long term success of the work was dependent upon the ability to commit resources over a sustained period of time. The long-term return on investment, in terms of both economic impact and achieving outcomes for individuals, was expected to be significant. Consequently, it was recognised that further financial support could be explored with the Kent Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board.

Mr Matt Roberts, Community Partnerships & Resilience Manager, introduced a presentation on Domestic Abuse and The White Ribbon Campaign. Mr Roberts highlighted the link between large sporting events and violent crime, and explained that occasions such as Christmas were expected to influence a rise in domestic violence. Mr Roberts explained that it was too soon to assess the impact of the recent White Ribbon Campaign, however, this would be evaluated at a later date.

The Committee acknowledged the effectiveness of recent engagement, which had raised awareness of The White Ribbon Campaign. Members also commented on the success of using fun activities to deal with serious issues. It was suggested that engagement with local television companies ahead of Christmas could be pursued.

Following a question from the Committee, Officers reiterated that violent crime was not solely male to female. All victims of violent crime, regardless of their age or gender, should be encouraged to report incidents, as this was key to preventing the escalation of issues.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that the recent White Ribbon Campaign had focussed on the Town Centre, largely due to the work done alongside establishments that were showing the football World Cup on TV. However, a mapping exercise to understand the trends of violent crime across the county was underway to ensure that future campaigns were effectively targeted.

Finally, it was highlighted that multi-agency join-up had improved. One example of this, the Kent Safeguarding Children Board, meant that professionals were able to share knowledge and ensured that conversations regarding domestic violence were regularly taking place.

RESOLVED: That the following recommendations be made to the Safer Maidstone Partnership:

- 1) That Officers pursue all available funding avenues with respect to substance misuse, including via the Kent Drug and Alcohol Partnership.
- 2) That advice is disseminated widely to parents, with respect to the Parent's Guide to Gangs and the support available to parents and grandparents, via social media and Councillors.
- 3) That specific attention be given to youth crime and violence in the Annual Strategic Assessment, including the impact of placements from London.
- 4) To consider delivering a presentation on organised crime at the next Maidstone Borough Council Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny meeting.
- 5) To consider advice from Maidstone Borough Council Members and Officers regarding engagement to be undertaken with specific schools.

Voting: Unanimous

68. PSPO: ONE YEAR ON

Mr Roberts introduced a report detailing the impact of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in the Town Centre since its implementation. It was explained that the PSPOs had been effective in reducing anti-social behaviour, and that the "warning and informing" of residents ahead of PSPO introduction had made a significant impact. It was recognised, however, that anti-social behaviour may have been displaced rather than prevented in some instances. Mr Roberts also highlighted that the PSPO opened up the opportunity to use stronger powers to stop anti-social behaviour, if required.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was stated that partnership work was key to breaking the entrenched behaviours that the PSPO responded to. Officers stressed that while a PSPO was an effective tool, it was not the only solution, and that other routes such as treatment and support were also being explored. Finally, as the legislation was relatively new, it would take time for Police Officers to be trained on the use of PSPOs in Maidstone.

Officers explained that it had been challenging to coherently display statutory information on public signage, while no specific guidance had been provided regarding this. This problem was exacerbated when the signage was placed high up on lampposts.

Officers confirmed that the PSPO was effective for another two years. In this time, consideration would need to be given about whether to continue with the order as it currently stands, or whether to refocus the PSPO to tackle other unwanted behaviours.

RESOLVED: That the following recommendations be made to the Safer Maidstone Partnership:

- 1) To review the Public Spaces Protection Order public signage in light of enforcement experience and the need for simplicity and clarity.
- 2) To review the Public Spaces Protection Order content and wording before consideration is given to the renewal of the order.

Voting: For – 4 Against – 3 Abstentions – 0

69. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 9.55 p.m.