

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 18 November 2024 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor T J Bartlett

Councillors: M W Rose
M Bates
S H Beer
D R Friend
S Hill
J P Loffman
M J Nee
D J Parks
L M Wright

Also present: Ms Liz Cokayne-Delves (Acting Chief Inspector, Kent Police)

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory)
Community Safety and Resilience Manager
Community Safety Officer
Democratic Services Officer

63 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

64 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members appointed.

65 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

66 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

67 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET RELATING TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no decisions for consideration.

68 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY PUBLIC PETITION, COUNCIL, CABINET, OR ANOTHER COMMITTEE

The Democratic Services Officer advised that there were no issues referred to the Committee by Council, Cabinet or another Committee.

69 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Committee received the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions for consideration.

RESOLVED: That the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions be noted.

70 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Officer presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme to the Committee for its consideration.

Councillors S H Beer and J P Loffman requested that the following items be added to the Work Programme:

- Climate Change and progress towards reaching net zero (within next 6 months)
- Update on progress in relation to Cabinet's decision on Fairtrade

Councillor M Bates requested that the following items, which he believed had been raised previously, be included in the Work Programme:

- Update on Port Health and activities taking place at Dover and Coquelles (including establishing why no border checks being undertaken at the latter)

Councillor L M Wright sought further information about the Kent County Council (KCC) Community Services item and when KCC officers were likely to attend a meeting for the purposes of updating the Committee which was long overdue.

In relation to Fair Trade, the Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory) advised that work associated with implementing Cabinet's decision was still being allocated and she would update the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED: That the matters raised by Members be added to the Work Programme.

71 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee was advised that there were no public speakers.

72 CRIME AND DISORDER

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a Crime and Disorder Update. The presentation covered the following points:

Community Safety Partnership

- The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Plan 2023-2027 and its three priorities of Safeguarding (adults, young people and children), Serious Violence and People & Places. Other priorities included Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Substance Misuse, Road Safety & Awareness and Food & Fuel.
- The CSP currently met biannually but this would be changing to quarterly
- A revitalised CSP Action Plan which was aligned with the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner's plan for funding and collaborative working, with sub-groups meeting at operational level.

- Meetings, chaired by DDC's Cabinet member for Community & Corporate Property, focused on the CSP's three priorities and outcomes were then reported to the CSP's executive.

Kent Police

- Kent Police's Kent Control Strategy 2024 was focused on four key areas: Exploitation, Serious Violence & Harm, Organised Crime and Violence Against Women & Girls.
- The new divisional policing model launched in October 2024 had three strands comprising Local Policing Teams (LPTs), Victim-Based Crime Teams (VBCTs) and a Community Safety Unit (CSU). It was predicted that all uniformed positions in Dover would be filled by March 2025.
- The advantages of the LPTs included greater visibility and motivation and an improved ability to respond, target individuals, develop intelligence and capture initial evidence.
- The VBCTs had dedicated/specialist investigative resources and were well equipped to focus on problem individuals and locations.
- The CSU was able to flex resources, had experienced officers with contacts and networks and strong working relationships with the CSP at all levels.
- Crime Statistics headlines:
 - All recorded crime down by 6.5% this financial year (FY)
 - All crimes with suspect interviewed – up 3% this FY
 - All crimes with solved outcomes – up 3.4% this FY
 - Victim-based Crime (October 2023-September 2024) – reasonably steady
 - Victim-based crime (October 2021 to September 2024) – down 6.4% this FY to date (310 fewer offences)
 - Victim-based crime with suspect interviewed – up 3.2% this FY
 - Victim-based crime with solved outcomes – up 2.5% this FY
 - Violent crime – down 6.9% this FY
 - Violent crime with suspect interviewed – up 4.6% this FY
 - Violent crime with solved outcomes – up 3.1% this FY
 - ASB – indications were that incidents generally decreasing in mean volume with recurring spikes in July when additional measures were put in place
 - The ASB data helped to identify where attention needed to be focused. Additional 'Grip' patrolling and partnership approaches were implemented in high volume ASB areas
 - Hate crime – had been an increase in 2024 but down from previous year
 - Violence with injury – similar to 2022 levels and lower than 2023
 - Theft shoplifting – average number in 2024
 - Theft shoplifting with solved outcomes – 17.6% fewer offences this FY to date and an 8.4% increase in solved rate.
 - Results achieved through 'Grip' funding and hotspot patrolling strategies, identifying seasonal crime and ASB issues in advance, joint community engagement events and partnership working (through the Serious & Organised Crime Panel, District Vulnerability Panel, beat officer engagements, presence and accountability, Violence Reduction Unit, Violence Against Women & Girls events, vulnerable people support and the Independent Advisory Group)

Members raised the following points:

- Noted that there was seemingly little change between the statistics for 2021 and 2024 and sought further information on which areas/partnerships were working well, which ones needed improvements and whether there were any weaknesses
- Concerned about trends regarding shoplifting, the percentage of crimes being solved and questioned CCTV's role
- Questioned why beat officers now rarely attended town and parish council meetings when invited. (The A/CI agreed to follow this up.)
- Requested the reinstatement of the virtual map of ASB hotspots, providing data for incidents reported to both KCC and the Council which would be merged with Kent Police data
- Statistics indicated that there was approximately a 30% interview rate for reported crimes, with roughly half of those then solved. How did this compare with other districts?
- Was there a central point where personal dashcam footage of incidents could be uploaded and investigated?

Community Safety, Emergency Planning and CCTV/Out-of-Hours

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- 3,593 incidents recorded on CCTV across the district since 1 April 2024.
- Police attended in 1,782 cases and 334 arrests had been made.
- The CCTV service had also received 686 thanks.
- The main incidents had been as follows:

Nuisance youths – 324
Disturbance – 318
Missing persons – 276
Shoplifting – 212
Assault – 205

The Community Safety and Resilience Manager (CSRM) commented as follows:

- Welcomed the opportunity to share information with the police on repeat offenders and to support prosecutions (606 requests for evidence in 2024)
- Commended the service's help in tracking vulnerable persons (151 in 2024)
- Total of 127 ASB cases submitted via the online portal since the beginning of 2024
- Frustrating that there was under and late reporting for shoplifting and ASB and working with the police on a shoplifting manual for businesses
- Stressed the need for residents to report ASB through the official channels rather than just on social media so that action could be taken
- Following reports of ASB in Tower Hamlets, a meeting was held and, despite a letter drop to 300 households, only 8 households had attended.
- Community Safety Survey created for use at community engagement events and tops ordered for an anti-spiking initiative
- Commando Chef – Royal Marines who had visited schools in Dover and Deal to engage with and educate young people about making the right choices for their wellbeing and future, using cookery as a prop
- Safe Spaces – a multi-agency collaboration launched in Dover district in September to provide publicly accessible venues with staff who would help a

young person feeling vulnerable, scared, etc and offer them a temporary place of refuge to contact a parent or other trusted person.

- Since June 2023, 218 safeguarding referrals had been made by Dover District Council staff, with additional training having prompted an increase.
- New mediation service introduced for residents subjected to ASB or involved in neighbour disputes.
- Referred to a number of future initiatives including the IMPACT festival (focusing on mental health, street safety, exploitation and knife crime), the Crosslinks Youth Hubs, Violence Against Women & Girls and Winter Well – Homelessness Support.
- The Out-of-Hours service had received a total of 1,675 calls from July to November 2024.

In response to questions, the CSRM responded as follows:

- Good working relationship with KCC and other partners in providing live CCTV information on traffic flow during TAP operations
- Parks and public toilets were often a focal point for ASB including street drinkers. Funding had helped address hotspots such as Stembrook toilets where a sharps box had been installed.
- Working closely with the Outreach Centre, Porchlight and the Council's housing team on an holistic approach, but if people failed to engage with services, community protection warnings would be issued and enforcement action in the form of fines or arrests would then be taken if necessary. There had been some successes in helping to move people off the streets.
- Agreed to look at providing internal training on neurodiversity for wider team.
- EU Entry/Exit System (EES) – plans and a reporting process were in place for the introduction/implementation of EES. The police had a business continuity plan and met key partners weekly for discussions.

The Acting Chief Inspector and the CSRM clarified as follows:

- Government 'Grip' funding used for initiatives designed to tackle serious violence and identify hot spots/zones
- Statistics indicated that levels of recorded crime had dropped but the percentages relating to interview rates, etc were the same or higher. There continued to be issues with serious violence in certain areas so there was more work to be done. On a positive note, the number of crimes solved had gone up.
- The level of shoplifting incidents solved had peaked at 80% between December and February when the levels of all crime reported had been lower.
- Shops were sometimes reluctant to support the police in prosecuting for low value thefts due to their own company 'write-off' policies. The statistics therefore reflected the disparity between the number of crimes reported and those subsequently solved.
- Whilst shoplifters might not be prosecuted for thefts under £200 if it was not deemed to be in the public interest to do so, that did not mean that offenders were not held responsible as cautions, fixed penalty notices and community resolutions could be used.
- Beat officers had their own focus and wards to deal with whereas hotspot patrolling could be done by any officer available to assist at that time.
- Due to increased numbers, beat officers were no longer routinely extracted from their routine duties to join response teams

- 5 LPTs were responsible for providing a 24-hour policing response
- Dover was fourth out of all Kent districts for solved crime rates
- 'Ask Angela' and 'Best Bar None' schemes were commended. Training had been provided on the latter scheme to increase the number of venues and information about the schemes was routinely given out by the Licensing team
- Issues with amalgamating crime data into ward maps and not straightforward to go live with it. Figures and headline data for individual wards could be provided to Members at any time.
- There was a new platform where users could upload dashcam or CCTV footage after registering. A link would be circulated.

RESOLVED: That the Crime and Disorder update be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.31 pm.