

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 26 October 2011

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), and Councillors Rebecca Blake, Anita Clayton, Roger Hill and Wanda King

Also Present:

M Collins (Independent Vice Chair of the Standards Committee)

Officers:

J Cooper and A Heighway and J Cooper

Overview and Scrutiny Support Officers:

J Bayley and M Craggs

8. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received from Mr Ken Hazeldine, Chair of Redditch Anti-Harassment Partnership.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip.

10. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on Tuesday 19th July 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

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11. REDDITCH COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The Panel received a briefing on the subject of Redditch Community Safety Partnership's Performance Framework prior to scrutinising the contents of the document.

Members were advised that in previous years local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) had been required to monitor performance in relation to key performance indicators. These performance indicators had been identified at a national and county level in the form of the Worcestershire Local Area Agreement (LAA). There had been financial incentives attached to high performance in relation to the LAA. As the Redditch Community Safety Partnership had performed well the Worcestershire Partnership, which managed the LAA, had been awarded £1.1 million. A portion of this, £500,000, had been awarded to Redditch in order to deliver the Area of Highest Needs project in Winyates.

Following the change in government in 2010 performance management requirements had altered. Community Safety Partnerships were no longer required to demonstrate performance in relation to performance indicators. Instead, Community Safety Partnerships had been encouraged to develop bespoke performance management arrangements.

The Redditch Community Safety Partnership's performance framework had been introduced in May 2011. The framework was divided into four sections which reflected the core themes of the Redditch Community Safety Plan: secure homes; protecting communities; reducing re-offending and restorative justice; and safer streets and places. The framework provided the partnership with an opportunity to record crime trends and to monitor performance in relation to the key subsidiary measures for each theme over a twelve month period. Significantly, the performance management framework focused on local needs and priorities.

The Panel was advised that there would potentially be further developments in relation to the performance management of Community Safety Partnerships in future years. In particular, the introduction of elected Police and Crime Commissioners in November 2012 was likely to impact on performance management arrangements. Similarly, Officers confirmed that it was possible that the Localism Act would also impact on Community Safety Partnerships, particularly with regards to planning and licensing

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arrangements. However, in both cases the exact implications would not be confirmed until the legislation had been finalised.

The achievements of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership and the methods by which these achievements were communicated to the public were discussed by the Panel. The partnership sometimes struggled to communicate their achievements to the public. However, Members were advised that there were many positive achievements, such as the Redditch Roadway Arts project, whereby distinctive public artwork was displayed in subways and bus shelters located throughout the town. These acted as visible signs of the partnership's work and helped people to feel safe. In addition, the sanctuary scheme, which was designed to help victims of domestic abuse, was cited as an example of a project that was helping to improve the safety of vulnerable local residents. The Panel agreed to issue a press release outlining these achievements to help the Partnership promote these examples of good practice.

The Panel scrutinised the content of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership's performance management framework in detail. In general, Members expressed satisfaction that the partnership appeared to be performing well in relation to most measures. However, concerns were expressed about a couple of issues.

Members questioned the increase in the number of offences that were classified as serious acquisitive crimes, which had increased by four per cent compared to the same time the previous year. Officers explained that it was difficult to provide accurate reasons for increases in particular types of crime. However, it was noted that during the period a number of prolific offenders had been active within the Borough and this may have contributed to the figures.

Similarly, Officers reported that it was difficult to provide specific reasons for an increase of 48 per cent since the same time the previous year in harassment offences. To an extent it was possible that more people were reporting this type of offence to the Police, though it was acknowledged that the number of offences might also be increasing. The extent to which cyber harassment figures were contributing to this rise, as a result of the increasing use of computers within society, was also debated.

Concerns were expressed about the increase in racially and religiously aggravated offences and Members questioned whether a particular ethnic group was being consistently targeted as part of this process. Whilst it was acknowledged that these figures were concerning, Members were advised that the Anti-Harassment Partnership in Redditch was actively working to address these

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types of crimes. Similarly, partner agencies were working hard to address an increase in crimes in relation to vulnerable adults and domestic abuse interest markers. To an extent in both cases the increase in crime levels could be connected to extensive community engagement work which encouraged people to report crimes, as well as improved training of local police officers.

Officers advised that the Worcestershire Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) was leading work to address alcohol and drug related admissions to hospital amongst young people. The DAAT was due to provide an update on progress in relation to this issue at the following meeting of the partnership's board. Due to the Panel's previous work scrutinising this issue it was agreed that subsequently this information should be forwarded on to the Panel for further consideration.

The Panel noted that the levels of bin fires occurring as a result of arson, particularly within Church Hill, had stabilised. The introduction of the bin node scheme in Chedworth Close had helped to address immediate concerns regarding the safety of tenants in an area where arson had the potential to cause severe damage. In the long-term, the activities of prolific arsonists living within the Borough would continue to be monitored to help avoid an increase in offences.

As a positive development Members noted that there had been a reduction in violent and public order offences related to the night time economy. In part, the improvements appeared to be connected to the economic downturn. However, many local public houses had also improved their approach to managing violent and public order offences.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

12. NOTES FROM REDDITCH COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Panel received and commented on the minutes of the meeting of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership's board that took place on Wednesday 18th May 2011.

The introduction of a joint North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership was discussed. The potential to merge the three existing partnerships into one joint partnership had been reviewed by the Worcestershire Safer Communities Board. The majority of

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responsible authorities had supported the introduction of a joint Community Safety Partnership for North Worcestershire for capacity reasons.

Members were advised that a joint partnership for the north of the county had been considered preferable to a joint partnership for the whole county. The types of crime and community safety issues within the north of the county were considered to be relatively similar. Furthermore, it was anticipated that collectively a joint partnership representing a larger area within the West Mercia Force area would be in a better position to attract funding from the elected Police and Crime Commissioner than a partnership representing a district.

However, Members had a number of concerns about the introduction of a joint partnership. In particular, Members suggested that a joint partnership was unlikely to focus in detail on the town. There was a risk in this context that the specific needs and priorities of Redditch residents would not be addressed.

RECOMMENDED that

Redditch Borough Council does not approve the merger of Redditch Community Safety Partnership (RCSP) with Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) and Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership (WFCSP) resulting in the creation of a North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP); and

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership board meeting on Wednesday 18th May 2011 be noted.

(During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to any action taken, or to be taken, in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime).

13. WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted that they would be proposing questions for the consideration of the Chair of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership at their following meeting in January. At the suggestion

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of the Chair it was agreed that the number of questions should be limited to a maximum of four.

RESOLVED that

the Panel's Work Programme be noted.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that

under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matters on the grounds that they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended."

- Notes from Redditch Community Safety Partnership.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.05 pm