

Overview & Scrutiny Appendix A

Committee

Portfolio Holder for Community Safety - Responses to Questions for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Question 1 - Why was the 'Safest Town in Britain' vision dropped from the Council's Corporate Strategy?

Community Safety is still a Redditch Borough Council's key priority. Having listened to partners and taking advice, it was decided that to have a vision that Redditch would be the Safest Town in Britain was misleading and too inspirational. How do you measure what is the safest. Do we compare ourselves with, other new towns, inner cities, rural Boroughs? This is a stated outcome to our residents that we will need to deliver against. I would argue that we will never be the safest but we are safe, the onus being on safe rather than safest.

Compounding this is the ever changing crime definition which makes data analysis very complicated.

Example Colchester and Tendring where headlines stated that the town was hailed the safest in England and Wales by think-tank Reform.

The Council was slammed in the media when crime levels started to rise in certain categories. From April 1 to July 2007 there were 1,872 recorded violent crimes in the two districts, 321 more than during the same period in 2006.

However the category of violent crime at that time spanned incidents ranging from murder and violent wounding to reports of dangerous dogs, harassment, bankruptcy, common assault without injury and public disorder without violence.

The spectrum is so broad Professor Adrian Smith, president of the Royal Statistical Society, advised the Government that the classification of violent crime must change, as less than 50 per cent of all recorded violent crime offences actually involve violence.

It is being honest and managing people's expectations. The Council is one of a number of agencies responsible for crime reduction. Redditch will never have a zero crime level. However there is a lot still to be done to tackle crime and ASB issues.

As stated this is still a priority area for the Council.

Colchester reference:

http://devel.gazette-news.co.uk/mostpopular.var.1568100.mostviewed.safest_town_in_england_try_telling_the_victims.php

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Question 2 - Which of our partner agencies are helping to address community safety within the Borough? Do you feel that our partners are contributing effectively?

Positive contributions from partner agencies, i.e Redditch Community Safety Partnership Tasking.

Funding is received from the Police, Fire Service and PCT. WCC support through the analyst role.

More work still needs to be done with local delivery as a number of agencies are not co-terminus with our boundaries. Partnership work is about managing relationships. Community Safety Team bring this invaluable skill. Act as catalysts, draw it all together.

Need to make sure that the Redditch Community Safety Partnership is 'fit for purpose' under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment Regime, as Community Safety and Partnership working is a key area.

Question 3 - What do you feel is the Council's role in shaping residents' perceptions of community safety within the Borough?

Councils have a significant impact on community safety and peoples perceptions through the design and management of the physical, built environment and also through the social conditions that are perceived to cause crime in residential and rural areas.

Elected Members and Officers often do not see how important their roles are. e.g If Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act was applicable when Redditch was expanded, the majority of the design faults that we have inherited would not have existed.

The Council can tackle perception issues in many and varied ways through the application of our core services, for example:

Local Strategic Partnership

- Through the work in preparing the Sustainable Community Strategy – at District and County level, the Council is actively involved in promoting the well-being and improved quality of life for our community.
- The local problems, concerns, needs and priorities identified enable the Council to gain an understanding of the relative importance attached to crime and disorder, and this supports the focused work of the Community Safety Team who co-ordinate and leads specific Community Safety Issues.

Community Safety Team

- They co-ordinate and facilitate the implementation of the Partnership Plan by all relevant partners and the community.
- Participate in the Strategic Action Task Groups to ensure links are made between agencies and the community
- Liaise regularly with the Lead officers from the other statutory partners to ensure that crime reduction targets are met, to share good practise,

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- Ensure that all RBC services are aware of their responsibilities under Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998

ASB Team

- Co-ordinates responses to reports of anti-social behaviour
- Case manage Council Tenant ASB issues
- Support other providers in tackling ASB issues

Environmental Services

- Licensing – managing the night time economy
- Graffiti – underpasses
- Efficient collection and disposal of refuse
- Noise Nuisance
- Stray dogs

Financial Services

- Maintain systems for auditing the costs of community safety activity
- Housing Benefits – prevention of fraud, and also when the officers visit many homes in the district they help identify problems and vulnerable people in the community.

Planning

- Preparation of planning briefs
- The Local plan aims to advance sustainable development and incorporates objectives and principles relating to safety, e.g. personal safety and freedom from crime through design, creation of new communities which are attractive and well designed.

Housing Services

- Homelessness
- Domestic Abuse
- Tenancy enforcement
- Capital spend on improved security – Woodrow Centre

Human Resources

- Diversity and Equalities Policies

Information Services and IT

- The website provides useful links and contacts for agencies and members of the community on all matters relating to crime reduction and community safety.

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Legal Services

- Enforcement Action – e.g. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
- Noise and Statutory Nuisance Notices

Leisure Services

- Sports facilities for young people
- Provision of recreational/diversionary activities

Local Authority Elected Members

- Members have a clear role in directing the input of the Local Authority to the crime and disorder reduction work through normal committee structures, and through the accountability of the Chief Executive to them.

Communications

- The Council's Communication Team has regular contact with the Community Safety Team and other Partnership Media officers to discuss media coverage of crime and disorder issues.