

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 22nd
September, 2021

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Jennifer Wheeler (Chair), and Councillors Imran Altaf, Joanne Beecham, Lucy Harrison and Ann Isherwood

Also Present:

Councillor Nyear Nazir (Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services)

Officers:

Bev Houghton and Judith Willis

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

1. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any Party Whip.

3. TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Reference was made to the Nominated Neighbour Packs, copies of which had been provided to Members of the Panel in the 2020/21 municipal year. It was agreed that copies of the pack should be made available to Members who had been newly appointed to the Panel in 2021/22.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday 30th September 2020 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

Chair

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4. NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - UPDATE ON WORK IN REDDITCH

The Community Safety Manager delivered a very detailed presentation updating Members on the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership in Redditch Borough. During the delivery of this presentation, the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The Community Safety Partnerships for the three districts in North Worcestershire merged in 2013 to create the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership.
- The North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership had a relationship with the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), who was held to account by the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel. Redditch Borough Council's representative on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel was the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enabling Services.
- The Partnership had a Community Safety Plan for the period 2021 to 2024. This plan, including the priorities within the plan, would be refreshed on an annual basis, taking into account the needs of the community and local data.
- The West Mercia PCC was in the process of consulting on the contents of the draft Safer West Mercia Plan 2021 to 2025. As part of this process, the PCC was keen to receive feedback from a range of different stakeholders including the public.
- When updating the content of the Community Safety Plan 2021 to 2024, the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership would need to take into account the proposals detailed in the Safer West Mercia Plan 2021 to 2025.
- The PCC provided a significant amount of grant funding to the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership to spend on specific projects.
- In addition, funding had been provided by the PCC since 2017/18 to all the community safety partnerships in the West Mercia region for CCTV. In 2020/21 this grant was spent on digital upgrades to existing systems. Work was in the process of being undertaken in north Worcestershire to determine how this funding should be spent locally.
- Delivery of projects in the Borough was co-ordinated at a local level by the Safer Redditch group, a sub-group of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership. This group was chaired by the local Chief Inspector and supported by the Community Safety team.

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- During the Covid-19 pandemic, a lot of community support and engagement work had been delivered by the Safer Redditch group online, including in respect of specific projects.
- Reducing reoffending and reducing the harm caused by drugs and alcohol were cross cutting priorities that underpinned the other themes of the Community Safety Plan. Reducing reoffending was also a statutory responsibility.
- The PCC was keen to ensure that all Community Safety Partnerships in the region contributed to Integrated Offender Management projects and, for this reason, some of the funding to the partnerships was top sliced for this purpose. The contributions per district for the Integrated Management System was calculated on the basis of local need and demographics.
- A number of youth projects had been prioritised for funding in 2020/21 due to concerns about the particular impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people.
- Youth projects included:
 - The Respect Programme, whereby young people were referred by schools for one-to-one support. In total, 186 referrals had been made under this scheme between September 2020 and July 2021.
 - The Empowering Young People programme, which was a group activity for young people who had been identified as likely to benefit from training in areas such as life skills, healthy relationships and County lines drug dealing.
 - Youth work outreach and detached youth work with young people considered to be at risk of offending due to being marginalised during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 2,000 young people had been referred for support under this programme during 2020/21. The Up Foundation CIC, a youth work charity, provided this service on behalf of the partnership.
 - The Virtual Decisions Knife Crime Project, which provided participants with an opportunity to work on a scenario using a virtual reality headset. Follow up workshops took place to provide participants with a chance to reflect on what they had learned. Since the end of the third national lockdown, a Redditch school had started to participate in the scheme and three further places remained available to other schools in the Borough.
 - The Young Citizens Challenge, which provided pupils in Year 6 with an opportunity to visit the fire station and to participate in relevant activities. This project had been co-ordinated online in 2020/21.
- Funding had been received from the Home Office from the Safer Streets Fund for a project in Woodrow, Redditch, for

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work on environmental and home security initiatives. This was one of only 50 projects across the country to successfully bid for funding under the scheme. Woodrow Centre and a couple of residential roads close to the centre had been selected for this project based on the lower super output data for the area.

- The Nominated Neighbour Scheme continued to be available to residents and evidence suggested that those who signed up to the scheme were not subsequently subjected to cold callers. Over 120 residents had signed up to the scheme by the date of the meeting.
- The Community Safety team undertook home security assessments on people's properties, designed to provide advice on action that could be taken to improve the security of properties.
- There were two members of staff in the Community Safety Team who had received training from the College of Policing on crime prevention and they used this knowledge when commenting on the security of proposed properties in planning applications.
- Support continued to be provided to victims of domestic abuse, including through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) scheme for high-risk cases. The Community Safety Team also worked with the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Group, tackling the behaviour of perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- The national Hate Crime Awareness Week was due to take place on 9th to 16th October 2021. In 2020, the Hate Crime Awareness Week had been accompanied by a social media campaign urging residents to report hate crime incidents.
- The White Ribbon Campaign would be taking place on 25th November to 1st December 2021 and would be focusing on the impact of domestic abuse on young people as well as healthy relationships.
- The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Focus Group, comprising a range of partner organisations, met on a quarterly basis to discuss ASB. The focus of this group was on raising awareness of best practice in terms of tackling ASB and supporting the professional officers tasked with undertaking this work.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The reason why Woodrow had been selected as the location for the Safer Streets project in Redditch and the support that had been received by this community in recent years. Officers explained that the process of identifying a location for the

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Safer Streets project was data led, based on criteria set by the Home Office. Analysis of super output area data for safer street crime types by the Home Office and police had revealed that Woodrow was the area of highest need in Redditch. Further work had been undertaken at a local level to identify the specific streets that should be included in the project.

- The extent to which there were issues with crime and ASB in Woodrow. The Panel was advised that there was a strong community in Woodrow but unfortunately there were some neighbourhoods where significant problems existed.
- The potential for other parts of the Borough to receive Safer Streets funding in future. Members were advised that there would be further opportunities to apply for funding in the future and the criteria was likely to change, depending on the focus of the specific Safer Streets project.
- The basis for the data required in relation to the Safer Streets project and the methods used to gather this data. Officers explained that the data was based on certain crime types reported to the Police.
- The potential for the data that had informed the decision to select Woodrow for the Safer Streets project to be shared with Members. Officers agreed to provide this data for Members' consideration but asked Members to note that this data focused on Woodrow only and comparative data would not be available for other areas.
- The ASB data for different wards in Redditch and the reasons why this did not highlight a particular issue with ASB in Woodrow. The Panel was informed that the ASB data was different to the crime types data that had informed considerations in respect of the Safer Streets project. Members were also asked to note that the ASB data was provided at the ward level and Woodrow formed part of the Greenlands ward.
- The potential for the crime types data underpinning the Safer Streets project to be shared with Members. Officers agreed to provide this information to Members after the meeting.
- The time that had lapsed between gathering data that had informed the identification of Woodrow as the focus for the Safer Streets project and the delivery of that project. Officers confirmed that this data had been gathered two years' previously and there could have been changes in local conditions in that time.
- The West Mercia PCC's consultation in respect of the West Mercia Plan 2021 to 2025, the closing date for which was 1st November 2021, and the ways in which the public could participate in this consultation process. Members were informed that residents could participate online in the

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consultation process, though paper copies had also been circulated via Parish Councils and local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups.

During consideration of this item, the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services acknowledged the understandable desire of Members to ensure that projects were delivered in their wards which tackled community safety issues. The reasons for the selection of Woodrow for the Safer Streets project had been questioned at the start of the project but the data available demonstrated that it was the most appropriate location in which this project could be delivered.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

5. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR - UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE PARTNERSHIP

The Community Safety Manager also delivered a very detailed presentation in respect of the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership to tackle ASB. This report had been requested as a regular update to the Panel at the meeting of the Panel that took place in September 2020. Members were asked to note that the data provided in the report and presentation covered the period April 2018 to July 2021.

During the delivery of this presentation, the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- There were different types of preventative action that could be taken to deter ASB.
- In Housing, this included the use of Introductory Tenancies, whereby new tenants could be expelled from their properties if they caused ASB.
- There were also specific verbal and written warnings that could be issued again residents involved in ASB. This included Community Protection Warnings (CPWs), which could be elevated to Community Protection Notices (CPNs) if residents did not change their behaviour in response to the warning that had been issued.
- Failure to comply with the terms of a CPN was a criminal offence.
- The Council had issued 23 CPWs between September 2020 and August 2021 and 11 CPNs. Some CPNs had been issued in planning enforcement cases.

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- Residents could request a Community Trigger, in cases where residents were concerned that limited action had been taken and they therefore wanted a review of their case and the way it had been handled. Since September 2020, three Community Triggers, which were managed by the Community Safety team, had been recorded for Redditch, which all related to disruptive neighbour nuisance issues.
- There was an option available for the Council to refer people for mediation and restorative justice.
- Funding had been received for projects designed to tackle youth ASB in the community. In addition, funding had been received for projects related to Covid-19 recovery.
- Representatives of the Community Safety Team attended multi agency meetings to discuss rough sleeping. Members were asked to note that many of the rough sleepers who had been housed during the national lockdowns had remained in their accommodation following the end of the lockdown. Some were being supported through the Housing First scheme.
- The data indicated that there had been an increase in reports of ASB in the period April 2020 to March 2021 compared to the previous 12-month period. This increase had occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic across all parts of the Borough.
- The largest increases in reports of ASB in this period had been in the Batchley and Brockhill and Astwood Bank and Feckenham wards.
- The increase in ASB included a rise in ASB nuisance calls, which appeared to have been influenced by the associated increase in the number of people working from home during the lockdown period who had been exposed to ASB that they might otherwise not have observed during working hours.
- In addition to nuisance ASB, there had been reports of personal ASB cases, involving behaviour targeted at specific individuals.

Members subsequently discussed the report in detail and in so doing raised the following matters:

- The number of CPNs that had been issued which had resulted in the Council taking court action. Officers confirmed that the Council had not taken court action in relation to any of the CPNs, though two people who had been issued with CPNs were appealing through the courts.
- The extent to which CPWs and CPNs could be regarded as a real deterrent to ASB if court action was not taken.
- The position of Council tenants and the extent to which they could be assured of a secure tenancy with the local authority regardless of their behaviour. Officers explained that if a

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tenant lost their tenancy as a result of their behaviour they were regarded as being intentionally homeless and the Council did not necessarily have a duty to rehome them under these circumstances.

- The number of Community Triggers that had been launched in Redditch and the reasons why this number was so low relative to the number of ASB cases that had been reported.
- The potential for mediation to be used to address ASB and the types of ASB cases where this might be useful. Officers explained that mediation might be useful in cases of neighbour disputes where no other action had been identified that could resolve the matter.
- The people who would undertake mediation in these circumstances. The Panel was informed that initially mediation would be provided through an external agency, though in the long-term it was envisaged that Officers in the Housing Department would be trained to provide this service.
- The circumstances in which restorative justice might be used. Officers clarified that a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) might work with residents on restorative justice in cases such as young people causing graffiti in local communities.
- The organisations involved in the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership and the extent to which VCS groups had opportunities to get involved with the partnership's work. Members were informed that there were a number of VCS groups involved with the Safer Redditch group, including Victim Support and several mental health charities.
- The £83,000 funding for youth ASB projects received by the partnership in 2020/21 and the extent to which this funding would be available in future years. The Panel was informed that this funding had been secured for a further two years and was likely to be a similar figure.
- The impact of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts on the behaviour of residents. Members were informed that these contracts were voluntary and both parties needed to sign up to the contract. Breaches of these contracts could be used as evidence in court that the Council was doing everything reasonably possible to address inappropriate behaviour and only taking court action as a last resort.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

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The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.45 pm

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