

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 14 April 2011

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), and Councillors Simon Chalk, Wanda King and Roger Hill

Also Present:

M Collins (Vice Chair of the Standards Committee)

Officers:

S Hanley

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and M Craggs

34. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Anita Clayton. There were no named substitutes.

Apologies were also received on behalf of Councillor Sheila Blagg (co-opted member for West Mercia Police Authority) and Mr Ken Hazeldine (Redditch Anti-Harassment Partnership).

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

36. MINUTES

The Chair informed the Panel that he had delivered a report about the previous meeting of the Panel for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2011. This report had outlined the content of the presentation on the subject of alcohol related admissions to hospital that had been delivered by a representative of the Worcestershire Drug and Alcohol Action Team

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Chair

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(DAAT). The Committee had questioned whether the Alexandra Hospital's policy of admitting intoxicated under age alcohol users was consistent with the policies of other hospitals across the country and had asked the Chair of the Panel to write to both the Worcestershire DAAT and the relevant Government Minister to clarify the alcohol related admissions practices at hospitals outside Redditch.

An initial letter to Worcestershire DAAT had subsequently been submitted and a response had been received which had clarified the process for alcohol related admissions to the Alexandra Hospital. Subsequently, a letter had been sent to Anne Milton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health, to seek further clarification about practices outside Redditch and comparable performance across the country.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Committee on 20th January 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

37. ANNUAL REPORT - CHAIR OF COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Members received the Annual Report from the Chair of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership which was provided in accordance with a list of questions that had been proposed at the previous meeting of the Panel.

- 1) Following confirmation of the Government's Grant Settlement, how are the budget cuts expected to impact upon the Redditch Community Safety Partnership?

The Worcestershire Safer Communities Board allocated funding from a central budget to each of the district Community Safety Partnerships. In 2011/12 the Community Safety Grant funding for Worcestershire would be £644,338 which represented a 20 per cent reduction on the previous year. This reduction had not had a negative impact on the Redditch Community Safety Partnership because the allocation of funds had been undertaken on a needs basis rather than in accordance with the size of the population. Consequently, the Redditch Community Safety Partnership had been allocated £107,400 for 2011/12 which represented an increase on the £90,327 allocated to the Partnership in 2010/11.

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In 2012/13 there would be a further reduction to the Community Safety Grant by an estimated 60 per cent compared to current levels. The grant would be administered by the elected Police Commissioner for the West Mercia Police Force area who would assume responsibility for allocating funds to the district Community Safety Partnerships.

In 2011/12 it had been agreed that the Redditch Community Safety Partnership would continue to allocate funds to support two posts: a Community Safety Analyst and a Community Safety Project Officer. The Partnership had also allocated funding to the delivery of a communications strategy, to operational tasking projects and to the Redditch Anti-Harassment Partnership. £17,400 remained to be allocated.

The Panel noted that the Police Commissioner would be assuming a wide range of responsibilities across a large geographical area. In this context the role of the Safer Communities Board would change. Consideration would need to be given to the appropriate role for the board in the transition period until a Police Commissioner had been elected and it was likely that the board would be in the position to advise the Police Commissioner following his/her election.

Members welcomed the allocation of funding on a needs basis and requested that their appreciation be reported to the Safer Communities Board. Furthermore, the Panel requested that, following the election of the Police Commissioner s/he should be advised of the Panel's view that a needs based approach to allocating community safety grant funding to community safety level partnerships should be adopted. Prior to this date it was agreed that a letter should be dispatched to Councillor Blagg, Chair of the West Mercia Police Authority, requesting that the views of the Panel be noted by the authority.

2) How is the Partnership performing in relation to its agreed targets?

The Panel was advised that the requirement to report to the central level on performance in relation to national performance indicators had been removed following the change of government in 2010. However, the Redditch Community Safety Partnership continued to monitor performance in relation to agreed national indicators and Local Area Agreement targets on a quarterly basis.

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The final performance data for 2010/11 was not due to be made available until the end of April 2011. However, at the previous meeting of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership's board, in February 2011, it had been reported that the partnership was performing well with regards to the majority of targets. In particular, there had reportedly been significant reductions in relation to British Crime Survey comparator crime, serious acquisitive crime and criminal damage during the year. There has also been improved performance in relation to NI 195a, concerning improved levels of street cleanliness and litter.

Similarly, positive performance had been reported in relation to NI 18, concerning adult re-offending rates, as Redditch was improving at a better rate than the county average. Negative perceptions of levels of anti-social behaviour in Redditch (NI 18) appeared to have fallen to approximately 12.9 per cent of the population which compared favourably to a target of 19.5 per cent. Perceptions of how the local Council and Police responded to concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime (NI 21) also appeared to have improved above target to 31.5 per cent.

Members were advised that performance in relation to NI 15, serious violent crime, was unfortunately regarded as 'red' or concerning. Rates had decreased quarter by quarter during 2010/11. However, unfortunately compared to the same period in the previous year rates had increased by 29 per cent. The Community Safety Partnership had discussed the matter and had attempted to identify the reasons for this increase in serious violent crime. Similar reports of an increase in serious violent crime had been received from across the county, potentially indicating that Police recording had become more robust, though other potential causes would be investigated including possible links to alcohol and domestic abuse.

Members discussed the presentation of performance statistics for the Borough. Whilst performance was often reported in relation to the whole of the Borough, performance statistics could also be provided at ward and street levels. In previous years a presentation on the subject of performance in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour had been delivered by representatives of the West Mercia Police Force at meetings of the Redditch Community Policing Board. Members suggested that representatives of the Police could be invited to deliver a similar presentation for the consideration of the Panel to help clarify local performance in relation to community safety.

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Based on the information provided in this report the Panel would be able to monitor the performance of the partnership more closely and could help to raise the profile of any positive outcomes.

A few problems had been experienced across the county with the local Offender Management Strategy. These problems had been recognised and the partnership was working with other relevant partners to resolve the problems. Representatives of the partnership were involved on an ongoing basis in various projects across the county that had been established to address persistent prolific offenders.

The impact of alcohol consumption and the night time economy on crime and anti-social behaviour levels in Redditch were discussed by the Panel. Members were advised that the night time economy and alcohol related crime and disorder were of concern at a county level. However, the extent to which alcohol and the night time economy impacted on crime and anti-social behaviour in Redditch had been exaggerated in an article in the local press on the subject of Operation Vellum, a recent initiative which had in fact focused on targeting a few persistent offenders.

Overall the performance of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership in 2010/11 was considered to have been good. However, the partnership was not complacent and continued to seek ways to improve. In this context, close monitoring of the partnership by the Panel and Overview and Scrutiny Committee would contribute to continuing improvement.

3) What are your aspirations, as Chair, for the Partnership for 2011?

A number of key tasks and aspirations for 2011/12 had been identified by the partnership. This included the following aspirations:

- a) delivery of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership Plan and the key themes contained within the plan in relation to: secure homes; safer streets and public places; protecting communities; and reducing re-offending/restorative justice;
- b) development of an effective local performance monitoring framework for the new single data set from April 2011;

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- c) identification of how partner budget and resource reductions would impact on the partnership and community safety projects;
- d) collaboration with partner organisations to further mainstream grant funded activities; and
- e) collaboration with the Worcestershire Safer Communities Board and West Mercia Criminal Justice Board to establish links with the new Police Commissioner.

The Chair of the Partnership had recently been elected to Chair the Worcestershire Safer Communities Board for 2011/12. This represented an opportunity to enhance the work of the board and to ensure that during the transitional phase before the introduction of the Police Commissioners the board could establish a useful role in the context of community safety.

The Safer Communities Board had recently agreed to review options for shared Community Safety Partnerships in the county. There was already a shared Community Safety Partnership in the south of the county. Options could include a Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership or potentially a North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership. Partnership arrangements would need to represent the best use of resources and demonstrate value for money.

- 4) What is the latest situation regarding the possible establishment of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre in the West Midlands area?

Agreement had recently been reached for funding to be allocated to a West Mercia Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). Premises in Worcester had been purchased by the West Mercia Police Force as the base for a SARC. Additional 'spoke' sites would be established in Telford, Hereford and Shropshire. The Police and NHS would take a lead on the development and two Directors of Public Health would sit on the SARC Strategic Board. The provision of the Forensic Medical Examination (FME) service was due to go through the tendering process. Contained within the terms and conditions for this tender would be a requirement for there to be a 90 minute response time and access to female Forensic Medical Examiners.

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Members noted that it was not possible to determine to what extent the Panel's review of SARCs had impacted on the decision to fund a centre. However, it seemed likely that their position and the subsequent support provided by the Council had helped to influence developments.

- 5) Is there anything you would like to raise in relation to the Partnership's relationship with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership? How do you see this relationship progressing?

Members were advised that the Redditch Community Safety Partnership welcomed the support provided by the Panel and the positive working relationship that had developed. Members were advised that the Panel could make a significant contribution in relation to the partnership which would further progress this relationship.

Firstly, the Panel could undertake an overview of the partnership's new performance management framework. This framework would relate to the new minimum data set and community safety performance indicators. Secondly, it was suggested that the Panel could review the options for shared Community Safety Partnerships. Shared service arrangements would have implications both for local partner organisations and for crime and disorder scrutiny arrangements across the county so would need to be considered in detail prior to any final decisions being taken. However, it was unlikely that any proposals on this subject would be available until later in the year.

Members thanked the Chair of the partnership for her report and requested that the partnership be advised of the Panel's appreciation of the body's co-operation with the scrutiny process during the year.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the West Mercia Police Force should be invited to send a representative to deliver a presentation on the subject of performance in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour;**
- 2) **subject to receipt of training from relevant partnership representatives, a review of the new community safety Performance Management Framework be added to the Panel's Work Programme;**

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- 3) consideration of proposals for shared community safety partnerships be added to the Panel's Work Programme; and
- 4) the report be noted.

38. END OF YEAR REVIEW

The Panel discussed the conduct of business during the year and aspirations for the future.

Members noted that as 2010/11 was the first year when the crime and disorder scrutiny function had been fully implemented it was difficult to compare performance to previous years. However, Members were generally satisfied with the performance of the Panel. A number of core items identified early in the year had been considered, including SARCS and alcohol related admissions rates. The Panel had also responded to the national developments by contributing to the national consultation process on changes to policing in the 21st century.

Members were keen to ensure that the Panel should continue to receive presentations from relevant partner representatives as this helped to ensure that scrutiny by the Panel was fully informed and effective. There was some interest in receiving further information about the respective roles of different partners on the body to help Members to develop their understanding and expertise in the field of community safety. However, it was recognised that, in accordance with statutory guidelines, the focus of the Panel would need to remain on the partnership and not on the work of individual partner organisations.

The Panel concluded that the strength of the Panel was the relatively small size of the body. This ensured that meetings could be convened at a relatively short notice. Consequently, it had been possible to convene an extra meeting of the Panel during the year.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

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39. WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the content of the Panel's Work Programme. It was agreed that at the following meeting of the Panel relevant representatives from the Redditch Community Safety Partnership should be invited to deliver a presentation on the subject of the new community safety performance management framework.

RESOLVED that

- 1) subject to receipt of training, the new community safety performance management framework be considered at the following meeting of the Panel; and**
- 2) the Panel's work programme be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.10 pm