

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday, 17 January 2012

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), and Councillors Roger Hill and Rebecca Blake

Also Present:

Michael Collins (independent Vice Chair of the Standards Committee)

Officers:

A Heighway and B Houghton

Committee Services Officer:

M Craggs

15. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from Borough Councillors Anita Clayton and Wanda King; County Councillor Sheila Blagg; and Ken Hazeldene from the Redditch Anti-Harassment Partnership.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of party whip.

17. MINUTES

Members were informed that the Executive Committee had agreed at its meeting of 15th November 2011 to reject the Panel's recommendation for the Council not approve the merger of Redditch Community Safety Partnership with the respective Community Safety Partnerships serving Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest to form a North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP), as referenced in minute item 12. The

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Chair

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NWCSP would therefore be created, subject to the endorsement of the responsible authorities.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on Wednesday 26th October 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18. REDDITCH COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The Panel received a verbal overview of the 2011/12 quarter two performance tables for the Redditch Community Safety Partnership Framework. It was explained that the annual refresh of the Partnership Plan had been delayed whilst discussions were being held about how best to co-ordinate the production of the annual Strategic Assessment in light of forthcoming changes to Community Safety Partnership arrangements, reductions in funding and the election of the new Police & Crime Commissioner. Officers were therefore continuing to work to the current Partnership Plan which contained the four priorities of: Protecting Communities; Reducing Re-offending and Restorative Justice; Safer Streets and Places; and Secure Homes.

It was also explained that the Framework had been designed to provide a fairer reflection of crime in the Borough as it showed performance figures on a rolling twelve month format. This made it easier to establish accurate patterns and trends over a period of time rather than identifying seasonal spikes and dips from month to month.

The Panel was led through the crime figures under each of the four priority areas:

Protecting Communities

The number of harassment offences and racially or religiously aggravated offences had increased slightly compared to the same position twelve months before. However, this could be attributed to greater public confidence in reporting incidents of crime – specifically victims' increased confidence that their complaints would be suitably recorded and actioned. Members heard that these increases often followed increased publicity around reporting these types of offences.

However, the Panel queried whether a genuine rise of a specific type of crime could be missed if this was almost automatically attributed to greater public confidence that their reporting of crime

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would be recorded. Officers explained that Partnership officers were able undertake an in-depth assessment of the frequency of certain crimes being reported and the reasons behind this. Officers also said that it was important to make a distinction between what is reported and recorded and offences that make it to the point where they are dealt with by the courts.

Members discussed the importance of providing support to victims of crime and those who were called to act as a witness at court hearings. It was felt that this could be a very intimidating experience. The Panel heard that there were existing mechanisms for providing support to victims and witnesses of crime to mitigate this, most notably through Victim Support and the Witness Service Scheme. Members expressed an interest in obtaining further information on this matter from the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership.

Of the numerous associated projects, Members were informed that funding had been secured for further Operation STAYSAFE events. These events provided preventative care for young people at risk of harm from consuming alcohol whilst on the streets and in open spaces.

Also, the Panel learnt that multi-agency support was being provided for “adults with chaotic lifestyles” who were particularly vulnerable to harm.

Reducing Re-offending and Restorative Justice

The Panel was informed that the volume of offences in this priority area had slightly decreased compared to the same position a year before.

Of the associated projects, Members were especially interested in the Community Payback aspect from the Integrated Offender Management Group. It was felt that there needed to be greater publicity of this scheme to promote this productive scheme that was facilitated by the Community Safety Team. The Panel agreed to phrase another question based on this to the Chair of the Community Safety Team.

Safer Streets and Places

The Panel was pleased to learn that number of recorded assaults of all levels had significantly reduced during the second quarter. The number of recorded assaults under the most serious bracket was the lowest for eighteen months. This could be attributed to the collective work of the Community Safety Partnership to make Redditch a safer place, including improved street lighting and CCTV

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in the town centre, improved landscaping, etc rather than one specific aspect.

There had, however, been a spike in deliberate fires. This was accounted for by a series of offences by one offender in the Winyates area, over a particular weekend. It was thought that the number of offences under this crime type would decrease in the next quarter.

The Panel welcomed the work the Community Safety Partnership had carried out together with licensees and other relevant agencies to help make Redditch a safer place at night and to improve the night-time economy.

Members were also glad to hear that Officers from the Community Safety Team had received specialist training on the prevention of crime around planning and architectural design matters. It was very rare for non-Police Officers to have the opportunity to attend the training course delivered by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA). It was agreed that the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership would be asked to provide a fuller explanation of how the Partnership and Borough in general would benefit from their expertise.

Finally, the Panel was informed that recent Neighbourhood Action Day that had taken place in Smallwood had successfully engaged the local community on a variety of community safety matters.

Secure Homes

The number of recorded offences for domestic burglary, criminal damage and acquisitive crime had generally increased within this priority area. These types of offences can often be attributed to a small number of prolific offenders who are monitored and managed through the PPO scheme. However, the Community Safety Partnerships contribution to tackling these issues is to continue to urge residents to remain vigilant and protect their property using available crime prevention tools.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair thanked Officers for the report.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

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19. NOTES OF THE REDDITCH COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP MEETING - 24TH AUGUST 2011

The Panel received and commented on the minutes of the meeting of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership's board that took place on Wednesday 24th August 2011.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership board meeting on Wednesday 24th August 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).

20. QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Panel considered appropriate questions to be submitted to the Chair of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership in advance of her attendance at the next meeting.

Members agreed the following questions:

- 1) (The Panel has been made aware that the Victim Support Scheme provides invaluable support to victims and witnesses of crime). What is the Community Safety Partnership doing to raise awareness of the Scheme in Redditch? Exactly what type of support is being provided through the Scheme?
- 2) (The Panel is also aware and very much supportive of the Community Payback Scheme in Redditch). How is the Partnership helping to expand, improve, and further publicise the Scheme in the Borough?
- 3) (The Panel understands that members of the Community Safety Team have recently been trained to become specialist advisors on the prevention of crime) What benefits do you expect the Partnership, and Redditch in general, will accrue through this?

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RESOLVED that

the questions as noted above be sent to the Chair of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership prior to her attendance at the following meeting of the Panel.

21. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED that

the Panel's Work Programme be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.05 pm
and closed at 8.45 pm