

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 9th April, 2015.

Present:- Councillors Smith (Vice-Chair), Bal, N Holledge, Malik, Rana and Usmani

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Strutton.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Nazir, Coad and Pantelic

PART I

57. Declaration of Interest

Councillor Bal declared that a family member worked at Slough Borough Council and another at arvato.

58. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 3rd March 2015

Resolved – That the minutes of the last meeting held on 3rd March 2015 be approved as a correct record.

59. Member Questions

None were received.

60. Presentation by Francis Habgood, Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police

The Chairman welcomed Francis Habgood, Chief Constable and Simon Bowden, Local Area Commander to the meeting.

Francis Habgood informed Members that HMIC carried out an annual assessment of police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy which was known as the PEEL Programme. Following publication details of the first PEEL assessment of Thames Valley Police (TVP) in November 2014, it was noted that TVP had a good track record at cutting crime and had seen one of the biggest reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour in England and Wales.

Key points were highlighted as:

- *Effectiveness – Good.* The force has
 - Low overall crime rates and maintains high levels of victim satisfaction.
 - Good understanding of local priorities and clearly targets resources at fighting crimes that matter most for local people.

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- Extra staff in frontline roles and specialist teams investigating crimes such as child sexual exploitation (CSE) in spite of financial austerity.
- *Efficiency - Good.*
 - TVP was on track to achieve its required savings of £58.9m over this spending review period and to meet its further financial challenge in 2015/16.
 - Has a comprehensive and well managed strategy in place to achieve the required savings, whilst minimising as far as possible the impact on frontline policing.
- *Legitimacy*
 - TVP was acting to achieve fairness and legitimacy in most of the practices that were examined. The Chief officer Team provided strong leadership.
 - The Force was committed to embracing the Code of Ethics. There was good evidence of staff challenging unprofessional behaviour and effective systems were in place to identify wrongdoing.
 - The processes for identifying and addressing the risks posed by misconduct, unprofessional behaviour and corruption were effective.

Details of the Police Delivery Plan Strategic Objectives 2015/16 were outlined:

- i) **Cut Crimes that are of the most concern to the Community:**
There had been a significant reduction in burglary and a continuous downward trend over the past four years.
- ii) **Increase the visible presence of the police: Special Constables / Mental Health.** There were currently 591 Special Constables. A new accreditation process being rolled out to ensure each special constable reaches independent patrol promptly. It was noted that the Roads Policing Team had won the South East Regional award. It was highlighted that the volume of mental health related incidents had risen. A successful Street Triage Pilot had been carried out in Oxfordshire and there were plans to roll the scheme out in Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Berkshire. There had been a 64% reduction in the number of people detained under Section 136 and being taken to custody.
- iii) **Protect our Communities from the most serious harm: Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) / Organised Crime Groups.** A comprehensive CSE action plan had been formulated and £3.5 million invested in dedicated resources since 2011. The Kingfisher Unit, which dealt specifically with CSE, had been established with Oxfordshire County Council. Multi Agency Safe-Guarding Hubs (MASH) had been set up in Bucks, Oxon, Milton Keynes, Reading, Slough and Windsor which were vital in ensuring various agencies

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were working closely together to protect children from serious harm. Details relating to Organised Crime Groups in the locality were briefly outlined.

- iv) **Improve Communication and use of technology to build community confidence and cut crime.** Members were advised that the use of social media had been very effective in targeting communications to inform the public and providing reassurance to the public during large events. Social media provided TVP an opportunity to reach out to communities who may not otherwise necessarily engage with the police. It was also highlighted that a pilot scheme in which over 350 body worn cameras were distributed across 33 locations had been a success. The body worn cameras enabled officers/staff to give evidence remotely without having to attend court in person.
- v) **Increase the professionalism and capability of our people.** The Code of Practice became effective from July 2014 and provided a framework to maintain the highest possible standards to uphold the reputation and legitimacy of the police.
- vi) **Reduce costs and protect the frontline Priority Based Budgeting.** Members attention was drawn to the fact that TVP was one of three forces that had increased the number of Police Constables despite the current climate of austerity. It was anticipated that approximately £20 million savings would need to be achieved over the next 2-3 years, although the final figure would depend on the results of the forthcoming general election.

In the ensuing debate a number of questions/comments were made including:

- *Strategy/focus under new leadership?* The Chief Constable informed Members that he had been a part of the senior leadership team at TVP for over 11 years and was therefore well acquainted with the issues facing TVP. However there were undoubtedly new challenges for the force both in terms of types of crimes committed and financial pressures and the manner in which TVP responded to these challenges was key.
- *To what extent were mental health crimes an issue in Slough and what impact had the loss of NHS Mental Services in Slough had upon TVP?* Local Area Commander, Simon Bowden, explained that Section 136 detentions were monitored on a daily basis and working in conjunction with mental health professionals had led to a reduction in detention rates. Slough Borough Council Chief Executive, Ruth Bagley, further explained that the Local Authority would be looking at the findings of the Street Triage Pilot that had recently successfully been carried out in Oxford.
- *Low level of reporting of crimes by ethnic minority groups.* It was recognised that certain communities were reluctant to contact the police and Members were assured that work was being carried out with various communities to forge good relationships between them and TVP. Officers had been in attendance at Neighbourhood Action Group meetings and

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regularly liaising with ward councillors. In response to whether language was a barrier, Committee Members were informed that TVP had access to Language Line and that language was not necessarily considered a barrier.

- *What actions were being taken to sustain TVP good performance.* The importance of preventative activity and working in partnership with Slough Safer Partnership (SSP) was emphasized. It was noted that SSP focused on specific problems and attempted to address the underlying issues in order to eliminate/reduce those specific crimes. TVP Management Team also monitored the types of crimes being committed and how to best make use of resources to address them.
- *How savings were likely to be achieved whilst safeguarding frontline staff?* The Chief Constable informed Members that 30% of the required savings would be made from non staff non frontline services.
- *Level of threat of terrorism in Slough?* Slough was rated as a Level 2 area – there were certain conditions in which radical extremism could grow – of which there were 37 areas across the country. Partnership activity and positive engagement were vital in addressing the issue.
- *Drugs and drug related activity in Slough.* The Committee were informed that the closure of over one hundred drug houses in Hackney had had a significant impact on neighbouring local authorities. Whilst acknowledging that the number of drug related incidents had increased, TVP were targeting their resources on disrupting the supply chain. Information provided by local residents was vital in addressing the issue and individuals could contact Crimestoppers anonymously if they did not wish to speak to TVP.
- *Measures taken to address Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).* Members attention was drawn to the measures that had been implemented following the Bull Finch Operation in Oxford. Key points included:
 - Recognising the issues regarding missing young people – return to home interviews.
 - Resources invested in investigations – 108 investigations currently in the TVP area.
 - Work relating to intelligence gathering and sharing with and/or communicating with other relevant agencies. Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs were vital in ensuring that the relevant agencies were aware of and involved when necessary.
 - Establishment of Kingfisher Unit in Oxford. The Unit was dedicated to recognising the signs of CSE and raising awareness of the issue via schools, teachers and local businesses' such as taxi firms and hotels.

It was noted that Slough's Local Safeguarding Children's Board had already implemented a number of the key learning points from Oxfordshire. In response to a Member question, the Local Area Commander informed the Committee that there were two current investigations in Slough in relation to CSE.

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On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Francis Habgood and Simon Bowden for their presentation and responses to Member questions. The Chair stated that he envisaged that the good working relationship between the Committee and Thames Valley Police would continue in the future.

Resolved – That details of the presentation be noted.

(Councillor Strutton left the meeting)

61. Slough Regeneration Partnership

The Committee were reminded that the Partnership Business Plan (PBP) was adopted by Slough Regeneration Partnership (SRP) and by the Council in March 2013 at the time of entering the joint venture with Morgan Sindall. The PBP set out the strategic direction of the partnership, with governance arrangements, operational business arrangements and provided a rolling five year plan of activities for the SRP.

Substantial progress had been made with some key projects including:

- Construction of the Curve was well underway with the whole build project anticipated to be both on budget and within time. Although some unanticipated issues had come to light during construction, the handover date remained on target for late September 2015.
- Ledgers Road – planning permission had been granted for the development of 73 houses and flats, with 24 units purchased by the HRA and made available to Slough residents on the housing waiting list.
- Wexham Nursery Site - planning permission had been granted for 104 homes, 34 of which would be purchased by the HRA and made available to Slough residents on the housing waiting list.

A number of issues were raised in the ensuing discussion, including clarification regarding the anticipated capital receipts for the Ledgers Road and Wexham Nursery Sites and the net profit receivable from the development of the sites. It was noted that this information would be circulated to Committee Members following the relevant information being obtained.

In response to a Member question, the Chief Executive explained that Slough continued to attract new businesses to the area and that the occupancy rate of the trading estate had been at the highest level for the past twenty years.

The Committee were informed that there had been a considerable amount of interest relating to re-development of the former Thames Valley University site and that a number of options were currently being examined.

Resolved – That progress being made by the Slough Regeneration Partnership be noted.

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62. Five Year Plan Update

Members were reminded that following consideration of the Five Year Plan at the previous committee meeting, it was agreed that the performance monitoring arrangements regarding scrutiny of the outcomes contained within the plan and the role that the Committee may play would be discussed in greater detail. The Head of Strategic Policy and Communications outlined the options available relating to monitoring the Plan which included:

- A revised corporate balance scorecard which was currently being developed.
- A new reporting template for each outcome based on the current 'Gold' project reports.
- Detailed review of the progress on individual outcomes.

It was brought to Members attention that regular monitoring reports would be submitted to the Committee as part of the amended version of the current performance and financial monitoring reports starting in the new municipal year.

A Member requested clarification relating to what measures were being implemented to ensure that Slough was the premier location in the South-East for businesses of all sizes to locate, start, grow and stay. The Chief Executive informed Members that although a temporary discount could be applied to business rates for new companies locating to the area, the Council's approach was to provide a range of support to the new businesses including identifying premises, advice about transport and facilities for employees and regulatory service support.

In the ensuing discussion a number of Members stated that effective scrutiny could only take place if each of the eight outcomes were examined in depth. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would report to the next meeting proposals for monitoring the outcomes and which, if any, would be delegated to a Scrutiny Panel for examination. It was also noted that the Five Year Plan reporting frequency to the committee would be addressed at the next meeting.

Resolved – That the performance monitoring arrangements to be adopted by the Committee be reported at the next meeting.

63. Annual Scrutiny Report 2014/15

The Scrutiny Officer presented details of the Annual Scrutiny report 2014/15 and invited Members to comment on the report. Key achievements during the past year were noted, including the findings of the Town Centre Parking Task and Finish Group.

Recommended to Council – That the Annual Scrutiny Report 2014/15 be endorsed.

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64. Attendance Record

Resolved – That details of the Members Attendance Record be noted.

65. Date of Next Meeting - Tuesday 16th June 2015

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 16th June 2015.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.45 pm)