

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 2nd March, 2017.

Present:- Councillors Plenty (Chair), Anderson, Davis, N Holledge, Rana and Wright

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Bains

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Rasib and Swindlehurst

PART 1

43. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were given in relation to the agenda items.

44. Minutes of the last meeting held on 17th January 2017

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2017 be approved as an accurate record.

45. Action Progress Report

The Panel sought further clarification as to the exact decision made by Cabinet regarding the road network in the Market Lane area on 6th February 2017.

Resolved: That the update on actions arising be noted.

46. Member Questions

The answers received to the members' questions were circulated to the Panel. The information regarding the littering project would be sent to members once available. The Panel would then make a decision as to how to proceed.

Regarding the hire of football pitches, the Panel sought more granular information. They were concerned that increased rent prices had discouraged teams in the area, and may have caused them to move away from the Slough Borough Council (SBC) area.

As a result, the Panel requested that an agenda item be added to the work programme. This would address more detailed information, such as:

- Which teams have ceased hiring SBC pitches? Are they teams based in Slough, or were they from outside the area and had been using SBC premises as they had been cheaper?
- What has happened to the level of income raised by hiring pitches? Have any other savings (e.g. maintenance of pitches) been made?

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- Are the facilities being used for free for training due to lax security?

Resolved: That an item on the hiring of football pitches be added to the agenda for 4th April 2017.

47. Thames Valley Police Overview

Thames Valley Police (TVP) had identified five local police priorities: protecting children and vulnerable adults, reducing harm caused by domestic violence, investing in staff, disrupting organised crime groups and community engagement.

Regarding the concern raised by Council on 26th July 2016, the number of rapes in Slough had declined by 4% (with a larger decline in non-domestic rape). However, other sexual offences had risen from 149 to 167, leading to an overall increase in all such offences of 5%. The reporting year would end in April 2017, and final figures would be available soon after this date. In terms of actions on sexual offences, the Parks and Open Spaces Task & Finish Group was specifically looking at assaults in public places. Meanwhile, the stated focus on domestic violence included domestic sexual assaults, and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults also include such crimes.

The Local Policing Area Commander was focusing traffic policing efforts on high casualty areas. In addition, travelling criminals were also being targeted; however, these priorities were not decided locally (although Slough Police Officers could make recommendations).

The balance of Police Constables and Police Community Support Officers had not changed drastically over the last 5 years. Slough would be receive an additional 12 new PCs by June 2017. Overall, Slough was often quoted as a an area of good practice for neighbouring authorities.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- The Panel wished to note the publication of HM Inspectorate of Constabulary's report into TVP's effectiveness. The rating of 'good' was noted and welcomed.
- The Council's motion on 26th July 2017 had called for the Safer Slough Partnership (SSP) to prioritise its response to counter serious sex crimes and reduce fear. In order to achieve this, Salt Hill Park had been identified as a key area for work. Although there were some concerns that geo-coding (e.g. an attack which took place outside the park, but saw the call made to report it made in Salt Hill Park, could be logged as having occurred in the Park) could have altered the statistics. Nevertheless, it was indisputable that high profile crimes had taken place there which had led to increased fear in the local population. However, as the number of rapes had decreased (and a local serial offender had been convicted), the situation was not considered to be at a crisis level. Patterns of crime were reviewed on a daily basis, and any patterns which raised concerns. However, the

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Panel wanted sight of the 2013 – 2016 SSP report. This report was currently being updated.

- Other initiatives (e.g. bushes being kept low, parks team keeping floodlights on, fire brigade vehicles shining their lights as they pass, horses in the High Street and public parks) had further improved the level of safety in Salt Hill Park. However, it would take time for the perception of this improvement to become real, leading to Salt Hill Park still seeing reduced levels of footfall.
- Any work undertaken to prioritise sexual assault needed to be sustainable. Given this, a number of events were being held within local communities (e.g. poetry days in parks, sports events) to alter perceptions and offer greater community ownership of these spaces. These offered solutions which changed views over the long term, and also were not cost intensive at a time of budgetary pressure for police forces.
- In addition, TVP and SSP were working in other parks to ensure that offences in Salt Hill Park did not transfer to other public spaces.
- Organised crime and drug dealing were identified as corporate priorities for policing. A multi agency meeting would take place to discuss Kennedy House in Harrison Way; meanwhile, the Slough Local Safeguarding Children's Board had raised the issue of the trade in drugs. All agencies involved were committed to early intervention and a joint response involving parents for maximum impact. TVP were also aware of the role of gang affiliation in forming permanent habits and altering behaviour.
- CCTV had been identified as an effective deterrent in areas owned by SBC, and would be used as appropriate.
- Nitrous Oxide use had been discussed under the banner of anti-social behaviour. Whilst TVP could remove it from people's possession, and any littering it caused could be treated as an offence, the gas itself was not an illegal narcotic.
- Domestic abuse had risen; whilst TVP were confident that this had been caused by greater levels of reporting from the local community, they were also aware that not all cases were being relayed to them. However, concerted efforts had been made to be more receptive and welcoming to those seeking to report cases to TVP.
- Members reinforced their desire to see TVP representation at all meetings of local Neighbourhood Action Groups.
- TVP was undertaking a full review of street lighting, and would base its judgements on information received from a variety of agencies and its own professional verdict. However, its ability to enforce greater lighting was restricted in areas under private ownership. It also needed to evaluate the potential for lighting to attract, rather than discourage, anti-social behaviour in some areas.
- SBC had put 5 cameras at key junctions to enforce red light offences it is possible that these could also be used to monitor the correct use of yellow box junctions. Whilst SBC had installed the cameras, TVP are responsible for its operation and take any revenue raised.

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- Bad driving was monitored by plain car road policing (although these were not dedicated to the matter), roving vehicles and other available resources. However, it was very difficult to identify the exact level of priority or expenditure given to this matter. Police were aware of 'hot spots' for poor driving (e.g. Tuns Lane Interchange).
- The SSP would soon be undertaking a perception survey, which would be used to support community engagement.

Resolved:

1. That a report for information on the respective powers of TVP and SBC, proposals for cameras, progress made on their installation, the associated costs and the positive effects of cameras for yellow box junctions be taken by the Panel on 4th April 2017.
2. That a report for information supplying detailed information on sexual assaults, criminal and non-recordable sexual violence, domestic abuse and the actions of TVP and the SSP be taken on 26th June 2017. This report will also include a summary of the work of the Parks and Public Spaces Task & Finish Group.
3. That the issue of sexual violence be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13th April 2017, which will be attended by the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC)
4. That the executive summary of the 2016 strategic assessment by the Safer Slough Partnership be circulated to the Panel.

48. Safer Slough Partnership Update

The SSP is Slough's statutory community safety partnership. It has recently been the subject of a reshaping and refocusing to ensure it had greater agility and made the best use of its resources. In addition, the work on safeguarding was more clearly co-ordinated; the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and its adult equivalent had the same Chair (Nick Georgiou), who is now a member of the SSP. In terms of SBC officers, Ginny de Haan (Head of Consumer Protection) sits on the Adult Safeguarding Board, and Garry Tallett (Community Safety Partnership Manager) is a member of the Children's Safeguarding Board.

The SSP's priorities and focus are based on local data and reflected that of TVP, with a new Performance Management Group established and the creation of the SSP Performance Management Framework clarifying the body's work and the delineation of responsibilities. The previous strategic group were not ideally aligned with the operational groups, and reshape has now improved communication and outcomes.

The Strategy Map outlined the SSP's work in clear terms, with all areas now having lead officers identified. As a result, the SSP has greater confidence that the new structure, membership of the body and strategic focus were in line with its aims and objectives. Given this, there was optimism that 2017 – 18 would seem tangible outcomes.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

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- Attendance from member organisations had previously been an issue; however, the last 2 meetings had seen much better engagement. The streamlining of meetings, with clear agendas and papers sent out well in advance, had significantly improved the meetings and had helped convince partners that outcomes would be achieved.
- Whilst the SSP had discussed sexual violence under different focuses specified by the partnership (e.g. domestic violence, crime prevention), the Panel argued that a specific focus explicitly targeted at sexual violence would be preferable. However, it was noted that , the Parks and Open Spaces Task & Finish Group was focused on the sexual violence which had led to the Council's motion on 26th July 2016.
- Modern slavery was a specific focus, as it was an emerging risk. At present, the SSP suspected that there was a local issue but recognised the need for more work in this area to increase awareness and identify potential areas of concern.
- Female genital mutilation was part of the violence against women and girls (VAWG) partnership approach. The cases identified thus far were historic, and often discovered by maternity staff at hospital). Schools also reported, and were often erring on the side of reporting when confronted with cases where there concerns but no specific evidence. Schools staff and early years carers were also receiving training on the matter.
- The CSE Licensing Splinter Group specifically focusing on increasing awareness of child sexual exploitation had been nominated for a national award.

Resolved: That the Panel recommend that the Safer Slough Partnership create a specific focus dedicated solely to sexual violence.

49. Forward Work Programme

Resolved: That the work programme be noted.

50. Attendance Record

Resolved: That the attendance record be noted.

51. Date of Next Meeting - 4th April 2017

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.23 pm)