

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**DATE:** 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2009

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I** **FOR DECISION**

#### **SCRUTINY OF CRIME AND DISORDER**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

To inform Members about new legislative provisions relating to the scrutiny of crime and disorder and to consider how the Council should take forward its responsibilities in this area of work.

##### **2 Recommendations**

That the following approach be adopted in respect of the scrutiny of crime and disorder matters:

- That as the Community Safety Strategy is currently included within the portfolio of the Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panel, it is recommended that this would be the most appropriate Panel to scrutinise crime and disorder issues as there is already an established structure to support the new provisions.
- That the Panel receive the Crime and Disorder Partnership's (CDRP) Annual Strategic Assessment and contribute to identifying priorities for each Annual Assessment.
- That the Panel programme specific meetings during the year where Members will scrutinise crime and disorder issues and that the Panel identify two areas for in-depth scrutiny.
- That the performance of the Partnership is examined by receiving regular performance information using the opportunity to look at both good and poor performance.
- That the Panel ensure that crime and disorder matters are considered at least one meeting per year.
- That Members of the CDRP be invited to the relevant meeting(s) and to work with the Panel to draw up an agenda for the meetings where appropriate.
- That the Panel commission Task and Finish Groups to conduct crime and disorder policy reviews as appropriate.

- That whilst the new legislation provides for the co-option of new members to the Scrutiny Panel, the current composition already includes co-optees from the Slough Federation of Tenants & Residents and therefore no further co-opted members are appointed at this time.

### 3 **Community Strategy Priorities**

- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**

Community safety consistently emerges as one of the top concerns for communities everywhere including in Slough. The new scrutiny provisions will enable elected Members to evaluate how CDRPs are tackling crime and disorder and potentially benefit communities everywhere.

The CDRP in Slough is known as the Safer Slough Partnership and forms part of the Local Strategic Partnership.

### 4 **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications at this stage. However, this may need to be reviewed regularly to ensure that adequate resources support the process as and when it evolves.

(b) Risk Management

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee regularly invites Thames Valley Police as a major council partner, to attend the Committee and is regularly appraised of police work. However, the Council needs to have a formal mechanism for the scrutiny of crime and disorder matters to comply with its legal obligations. If no action is taken the Council would not be meeting its legal obligations and would miss an opportunity to improve or achieve an outcome for local communities with regards to crime and disorder issues.

(c) Human rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act implications and the legal requirements of the legislation are set out in the report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

An initial screening has been undertaken and there is no negative impact on any sector or the community.

### 5 **Supporting Information**

#### 5.1 Legislative Framework

Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 sets out provisions requiring local authorities to have a Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee to review or scrutinise the decisions and actions of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in England and Wales. These provisions came into force on 30 April 2009 with guidance issued by the Home Office in June.

The legislation stipulates that any Panel established to scrutinise crime and disorder matters must meet a minimum of once a year. The regulations do not require Councils to alter existing committee structures. There must, however, be a formal place where community safety can be discussed.

The Scrutiny Panel must include the following general areas of activity:

- i) to scrutinise the decisions and action of the partnership members (responsible authorities)<sup>1</sup> within the CDRP. This includes
  - a) evaluating how the partnership members are discharging their crime and disorder functions.
  - b) requiring information from partners, and attendance at meetings.
  - c) requiring partners to respond to reports and 'have regard' to recommendations.

The emphasis is on the joint responses on community safety and scrutinising the partnership as a whole.

- ii) To receive councillor references following crime and disorder issues being raised by constituents known as "Councillor Call for Action" (Guidance note at Appendix A).

## 5.2 Key Issues

### The purpose of Crime and Disorder Scrutiny

The guidance suggests four main areas of work.

1. Policy development following in depth investigation of a specific local topic.
2. Contribution to the development of strategies.
3. Holding to account through formal hearings – questioning representatives of the partnership about their roles, responsibilities and activities.
4. Performance management – examination of the performance of the partnership.

The Panel could also help to challenge and highlight people's perceptions of crime and disorder in the local area and undertake community engagement initiatives to establish local people's priorities for crime and disorder issues.

The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will consider whether the scrutiny function at the Council is rigorously scrutinising performance in relation to crime and disorder and community safety issues. It is therefore essential that the Council takes the opportunity now to establish a clear and robust process to scrutinise crime and disorder matters.

## 6 **Comments of Other Committees**

This report is being considered by the Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> September.

## 7 **Conclusion**

It is important that the Council considers its approach to the scrutiny of crime and disorder matters and adopts appropriate arrangements.

## 8 **Appendices Attached**

'A' - Guidance on Councillor Call for Action.

## 9 **Background Papers**

Home Office National Support Framework  
Delivering Safer and Confident Communities -  
Guidance for the Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Matters – England  
Implementing Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006

(<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the Act and the Regulations, Responsible Authorities are those defined in section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988, namely:

The Chief Officer of Police and the Police Authority  
The Fire Authority  
The Primary Care Trust