

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 9 June 2021.

PRESENT: Mr A Booth (Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mrs R Binks, Mr N J Collor, Mr G Cooke, Mrs S Hudson, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr A M Ridgers, Mr J Wright, Dr L Sullivan, Mrs T Dean, MBE (Substitute for Mr A J Hook) and Mr P Stepto

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P M Hill (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr M Dentten (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Vice-Chair

(Item A3)

1. The Chairman proposed and Mr Wright seconded that Mr Barrington-King be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee.
2. The Chairman paid tribute to Mr Wright for his contributions to overview and scrutiny in his previous capacity as the Committee's Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED that Mr Barrington-King be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee.

2. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting

(Item A4)

1. Mrs Dean declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item B1, it was stated that a family member was employed by Kent Police.
2. Dr Sullivan declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item B1, it was stated that her husband chaired the Gravesham Community Safety Partnership.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 10 February 2021, 11 March 2021 and 27 May 2021

(Item A5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 10 February 2021, 11 March 2021 and 27 May 2021 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4. Kent Community Safety Agreement

(Item B1)

Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, KCC; Shafick Peerbux, Head of Community Safety, KCC; Detective Chief Superintendent Andy Pritchard, Kent Police; Superintendent Peter Steenhuis, Kent Police; Nick Wilkinson, Prevent and Channel Strategic Manager, KCC; Jess Mookherjee, Deputy Director of Public Health, KCC; Rachel Westlake, Commissioner, KCC and Serine Annan-Veitch, Policy Advisor, KCC were in attendance for this item.

1. The Chairman asked Mike Hill, as Chairman of the Kent Community Safety Partnership to introduce the item. He provided a verbal overview of the 6 constituent authorities within the Partnership and noted their statutory responsibilities for community safety in Kent.
2. Shafick Peerbux gave a presentation which outlined the role of the Kent Community Safety Partnership and statutory Community Safety Agreement. The Agreement's 7 key county-wide priorities were highlighted and included: Anti-Social Behaviour; Domestic Abuse; Road Safety; Preventing Extremism and Hate; Safeguarding Vulnerable People; Serious Violence and Organised Crime; and Substance Misuse. Partners provided further details on the priorities as well as the strategies considered and implemented as a result of the Agreement. Mr Peerbux confirmed that the Kent Community Safety Agreement for 2021-22 had been in effect since April 2021.
3. Superintendent Peter Steenhuis was asked what measures had been arranged to ensure that the views of children and young people were considered and understood. He confirmed that a new Schools Team, to be composed of 70 Schools Officers, had been established and that agreement had been received to procure a new community engagement tool, which provided postcode and district level information.
4. A Member requested that anti-social behaviour and its impact on community cohesion, with a specific focus on children and young people, be considered by the Committee at a future meeting.
5. Members raised concerns over the impact of speeding and privately owned e-scooters on pedestrian safety and emphasised that their use on paths constituted anti-social behaviour. Mr Steenhuis acknowledged the issue of private e-scooters in public areas and agreed that there had been instances of anti-social behaviour. It was noted that Kent Police possessed the power to issue offenders with fines or penalty points and could conduct seizures.
6. Addressing road safety, a Member highlighted the Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership's new speed camera policy as a possible area for future scrutiny, with a focus on safety requirements, cost and rural distribution.
7. Reassurance was sought by a Member and received from Mr Peerbux that the Safe Systems approach employed as part of KCC's Vision Zero road safety strategy balanced both road use and community safety.

8. Mr Steenhuis was asked what had been done to improve public satisfaction with Kent Police and encourage a greater level of crime reporting. He confirmed that Kent Police had invested in new social media management tools to improve public engagement and noted that Nextdoor.co.uk had allowed the Police to relay problems they had solved in the community.
9. Detective Chief Inspector Andy Pritchard confirmed that the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 had been passed and provided a new statutory definition for Domestic Abuse. Further confirmation was given that the statutory position of Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales had been established by the Act and commanded new powers including the capability to issue Domestic Abuse Prevention Orders.

Mrs Hudson left the meeting at 11:25.

10. A Member asked whether preventative measures had been adopted to safeguard individuals against Domestic Abuse; how commissioned services had tackled victim stigma; and for further detail on commissioning timeframes. Serine Annan-Veitch gave assurances that prevention was a core component of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy and referenced the information provided by the Domestic Abuse Support Services at www.domesticabuseservices.org.uk. She confirmed that as part of Operation Encompass, Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools were notified of incidents of police attending domestic abuse involving students, before the next school day, and were tasked with ensuring that support was provided to children or their families. Rachel Westlake informed Members that Domestic Abuse Support Services were commissioned as a single contract and that there was an option to extend the current contract by 2 years.
11. Ms Mookherjee was asked whether a strategy would be implemented to help substance misusers who had become dependent or increased their dependence during the Covid-19 pandemic. She confirmed that commissioned voluntary sector services had been contracted to aid substance misusers.
12. Nick Wilkinson was asked what had been planned to tackle social media radicalisation and expand screening capabilities. He stressed the importance of addressing social media use in schools, confirmed that specialist webinars were delivered to highlight online issues and recognised a current public accountability deficit on social media which had perpetuated radicalisation.
13. Members asked whether the Prevent team were cognisant of anti-Semitic trends and how the distinction between hate speech and critical views was made. Mr Wilkinson confirmed that his service was acutely aware of anti-Semitic tendencies and recognised the link between anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred, including right-wing extremism. He added that hate speech was distinct from conventional critical views when it endorsed banned extremist organisations, incited violence, or explicitly discriminated a specific person or group.

14. Ms Mookherjee was asked to explain the steps taken by Public Health to track and combat the use of psychoactive drugs. She confirmed that analysis of personal harm and the risks posed to society had recognised the connection between drug misuse and other crimes, including shoplifting and prostitution.
15. Mrs Westlake was asked to detail the provision of Domestic Abuse refuge accommodation in Kent. She confirmed that Kent had 107 beds divided across split communal, shared, and self-contained facilities. It was noted that a needs assessment had reviewed service provision.
16. A Member asked whether a central record of the number of children and young people affected by Domestic Abuse was maintained and if it included individual case information. Mr Pritchard confirmed that a central database was maintained and that it served as a point for information for all relevant partners.
17. Mr Hill invited Members to attend future meetings of the Kent Community Safety Partnership, which was due to next meet virtually on Tuesday, 13 July 2021. On behalf of his team and partners he gave thanks to Members for their interest, comments, and questions.
18. The Chairman thanked Mr Hill and members of the Partnership for their attendance, insight, and answers.
19. Mr Love moved and Mr Cooke seconded a motion that **“The Committee:**
 - a) note the Community Safety Agreement;**
 - b) ask that the Committee’s comments be considered by partners and impact future Community Safety Agreements; and**
 - c) thank partners for engaging in the scrutiny process.”**
20. The motion was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- a) note the Community Safety Agreement;
- b) ask that the Committee’s comments be considered by partners and impact future Community Safety Agreements; and
- c) thank partners for engaging in the scrutiny process.